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VIBE

EAST vs. WEST

Biggie & Puffy
Break Their Silence

WU-TANG CLAN

D'ANGELO

DR. DRE

JERMAINE DUPRI

BRANDY

CRUCIAL CONFLICT

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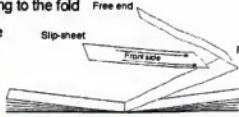


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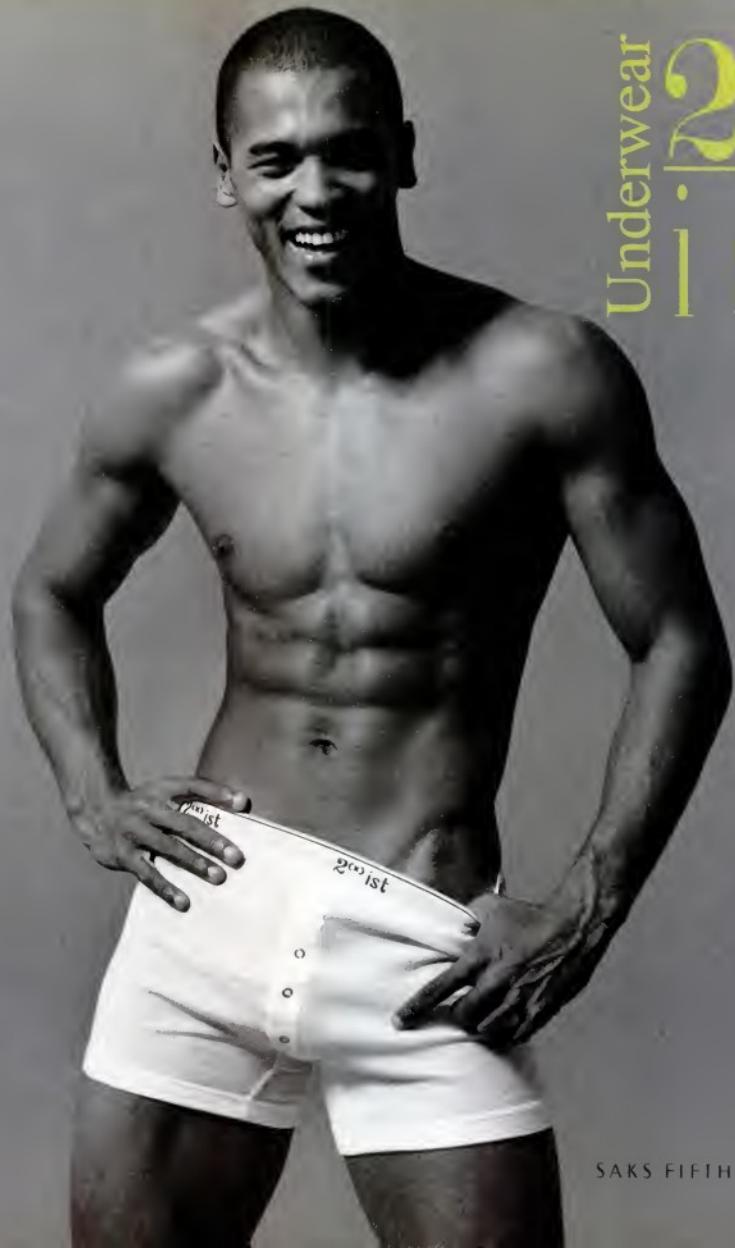
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SEPTEMBER 1996 • VOLUME 4, NUMBER 7
THE JUICE ISSUE



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By Michael A. Gonzales. Illustration by Guy Gonzales. Photograph by Xavier Guardans

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The Notorious B.I.G. photographed by Dana Lixenberg



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VIBE
ONLINE

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The Notorious B.I.G. (center) by Guy Aroch for Cell Communications; Emil Wilbekin (top); makeup by Yannick Léveillé for the Deborah Martin Agency; hair by Charles Jourdan; white dress shirt by Lazo; tie by Rochester Silversmiths

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Letter From the President

Every new idea is an impossibility until it is born.

—Ron Brown

Five years ago, the supreme keeper of the fountain of juice, Quincy Jones, had an idea for a magazine that would cover the world of urban music with the full journalistic respect that it deserves. Q's vision was to find a way to take the music and culture that have been his life's work and present them to the coolest people in the world—you, the VIBE readers. The kind of people who nod their heads to a hit, and turn their backs if it's wack. He spoke of a multicultural audience as a source of strength, almost a unique secret ingredient that would propel this magazine further than anyone could imagine. Quincy felt that while the music that this magazine would cover as its foundation is rooted in African-American culture, our audience would represent a great mosaic, a legion of brothers and sisters composed of all classes, creeds, and colors that could be united in the readership of VIBE.

I now come to you on the dawn of our third anniversary and reaffirm our dedication to Quincy's original vision. The VIBE editorial team, led by editor-in-chief Alan Light, has accepted the lofty challenge Quincy put forth, and has courageously expanded the world of music journalism to include many who otherwise might never have received the full props that they deserve.

It is fitting that our Juice Issue coincides with our anniversary. Juice is the lifeblood that pumps through the heart and soul of the

body of works that we cover at VIBE. What VIBE represents in its simplest form is the distillation of the power of urban culture—100-proof soul, if you will—served to you chilled in monthly doses of fly photos and dope words. Shaken, never stirred.

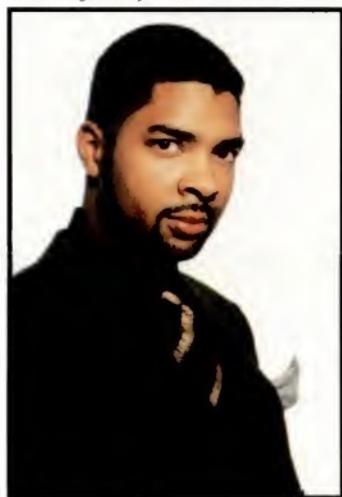
The true power of VIBE is that this music, this culture, and the people who live their lives to its rhythms are all filled with the spirit of soul. From the earliest days of the African drum to today's most sophisticated studio joints, black music has a direct connection with our souls. As we stand here, three years since the first issue of VIBE hit the newsstands, we can proudly say that we continue to better understand the power of that soul, and the responsibility of the historical legacy that it represents.

The fact that we even have a Juice Issue speaks to two clear realms of power. The first realm is the industry movers and shakers, the music-makers, those who are fabulous and those who think they are, the playa hatas and those they hate. The second realm is you, the VIBE reader. As a consumer, a tastemaker, you—individually and in legion with millions of others like yourself—have truly determined who is getting their swerve on...and who ain't.

Our mission at VIBE is to be one of the greatest institutions of music journalism in the world. On behalf of everyone here at VIBE, I would like to thank you for your support and your love. We will keep working on bringing you the juice from the dark, sweet fruit of urban entertainment. Shake well, then enjoy.

Peace,

Keith T. Clinkscales
President and CEO





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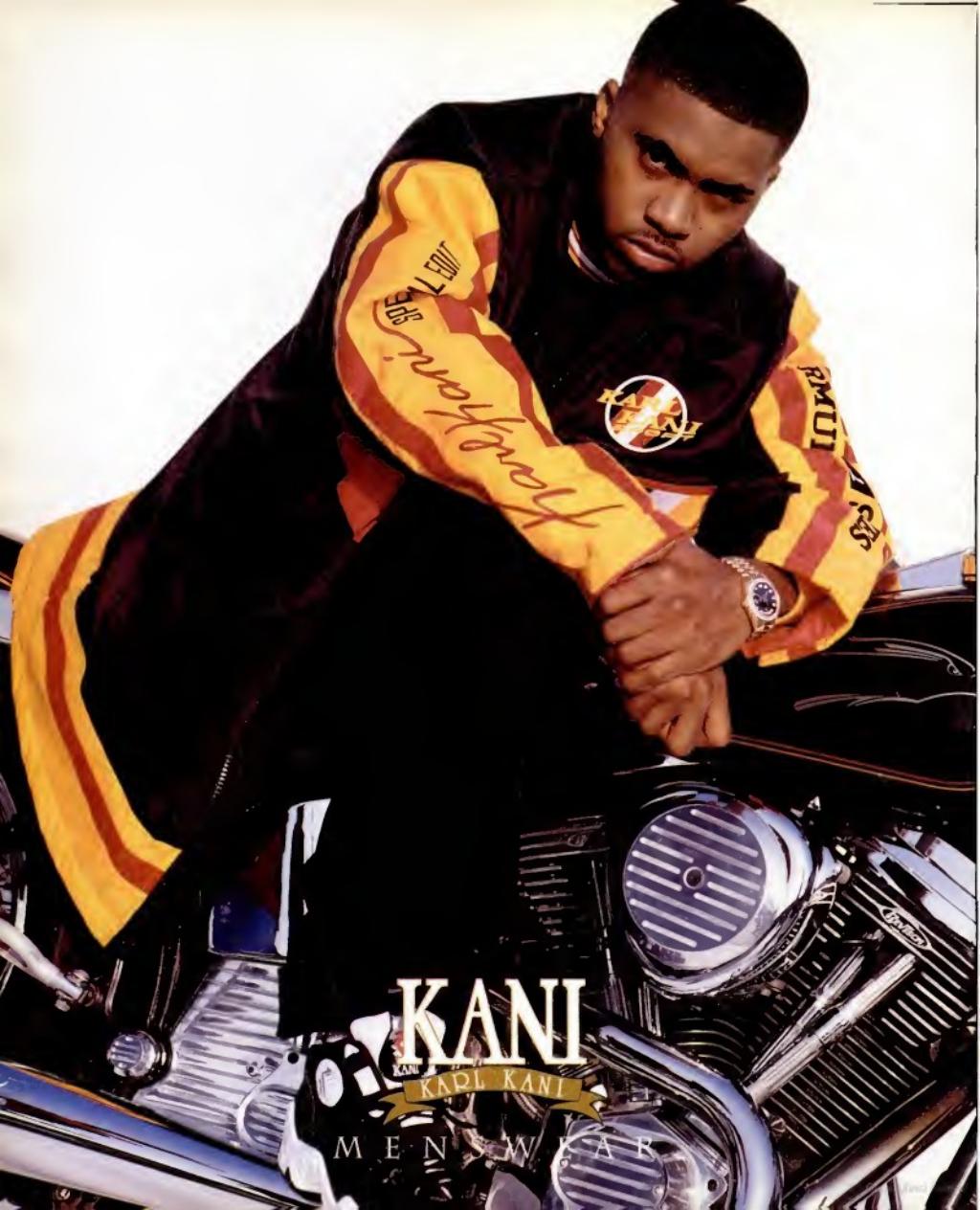
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Editor-in-Chief Alan Light

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Feature Editor Robert Kerner

Style Editor Emilio Wilhelmi

Senior Editor Carter Harris

Associate Editors Henry Cisneros, Joseph V. Tirella

Assistant Editors Karen G. O'Gara, Debbie Idowu

Researcher/Reporter OJ Lima

Writers-at-Large Kathy Dobie, Michael A. Gonzales, Sasha Jenkins, Greg Tate

Editorial Administrator Andréa M. Duncan

Editorial Assistant Kristin Saxon

Art Director Lee Miller-Fitzsimmons

Photo Editor George Price

Designer Dwayne Shaw

Art/Photo Assistant Duane Pyous

Fashion Director Derick Procopio

Fashion Assistant Jenny Altman

Editorial Production Manager Ryan Jones

Contributors:

Harry Allen, Kyle Baker, Farai Chideya, Cheo Hodari Coker, Bobbie Garcia, Elayne Gardner, Nelson George, James Hunter, Laura Jackson, Lisa Jones, Ipsita Kapadia, Béatrice Malouet, Robert Morales, Elena Oumiaga, Tom Sinclair, Cristina Verán, Harry Winger, Don Weller, Jodi Wood, Christian Wright

Photographers:

Ruben Abramson, Kevork Aslton, Butch Barron, Claudio, Geoffroy de Boisblanc, Exum, Larry Fink, Jamie D. S., Jay Guzikoff, Guillermo Gutiérrez, Hervé Guibert, Daniel Heffner, Michael Hickey, Sue Kwock, Dan Lan, Lisa Leong, Dana Linnartz, Miroslav McDonald, Reamy & Taylor, Neva Schatz, Darryl Turner, Everard Williams Jr., Dan Winters, Christian Witzel

Freelance Research/Copy:

David Bry, Marlene Glickman, Pamela Grossman, Bob Hevnerman, Virginia Olson, Marcus Reeves, Mark Schwartz

Interns:

Joe Boyce, Denial Chrison, Mans Cruz, Victoria Davis, Nichola Edwards, Alonso Graham, Monica Harding, Sherrine Jackson, Janice Kendricha, Sandra Mier, Tami Nowork, Yessica Pascual, Ayenne Quint, Cindy Quist, Charlotte Smith, Jerry Wong

Publisher John Rollins

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Account Executive Nedra Boyce

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New Media Associate: New Media Michael Hausewirth,

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New York Advertising Sales

205 Lexington Avenue, Suite 1000, New York, NY 10016 (212) 522-7092

West Coast Advertising Sales

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West Coast Sales Director Onnalee Outmane-MacDonald

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Midwest Sales Director Kenard Gibbs

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Director: Jeffrey Byrnes

Circlecation Director Dennis Sacher

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Business Manager Jacqueline P. Joseph

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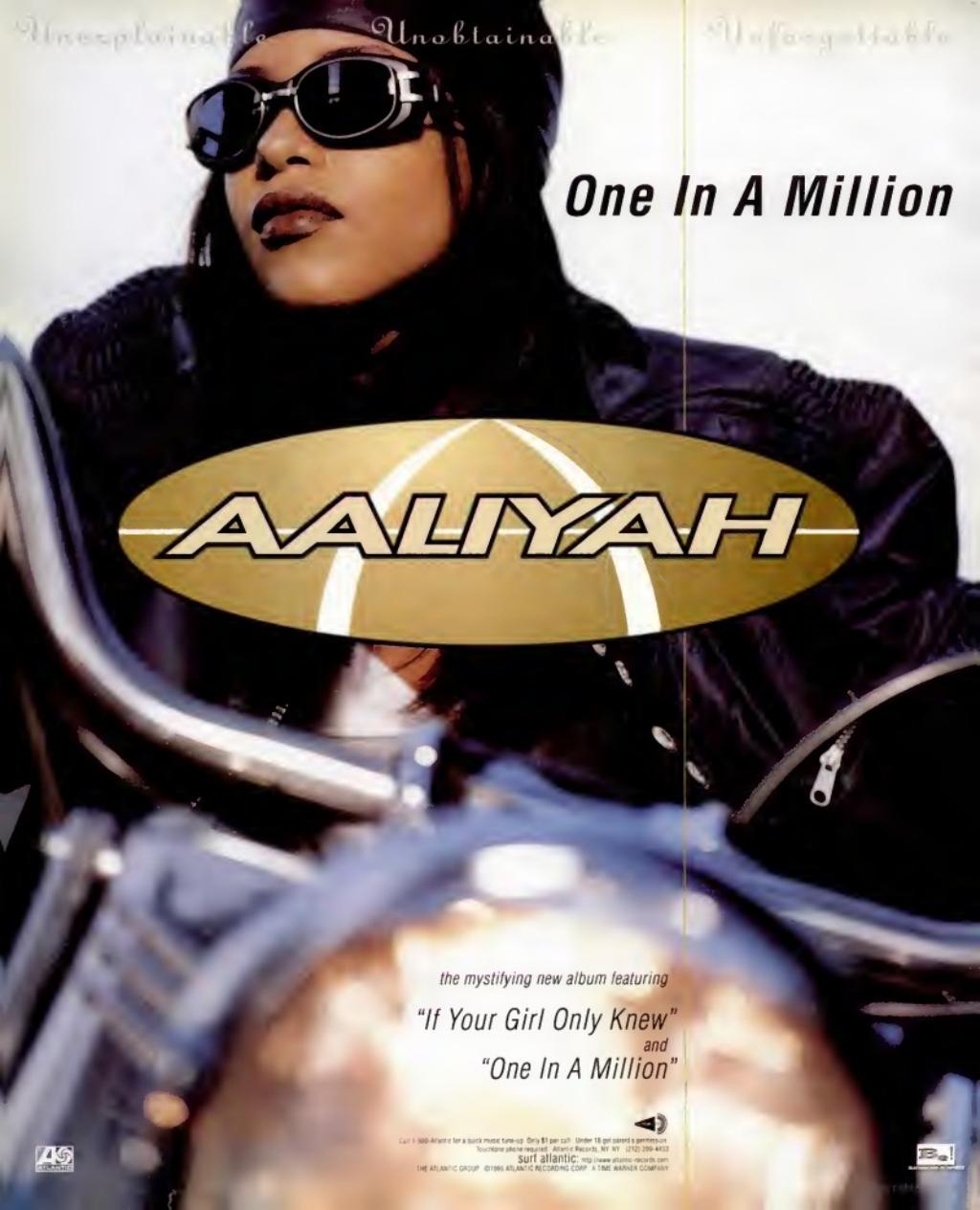
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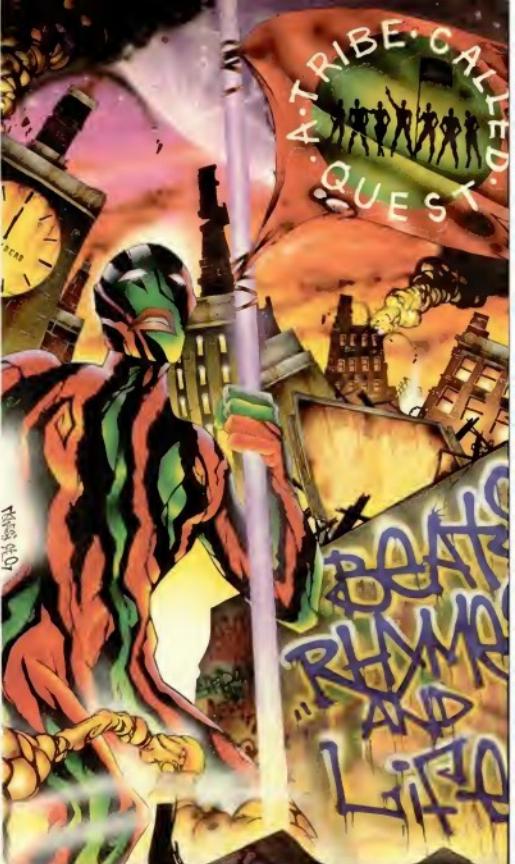
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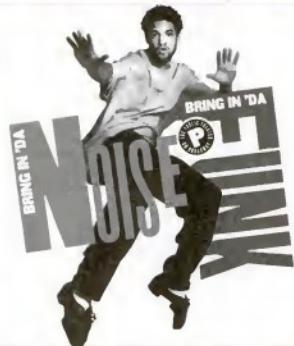


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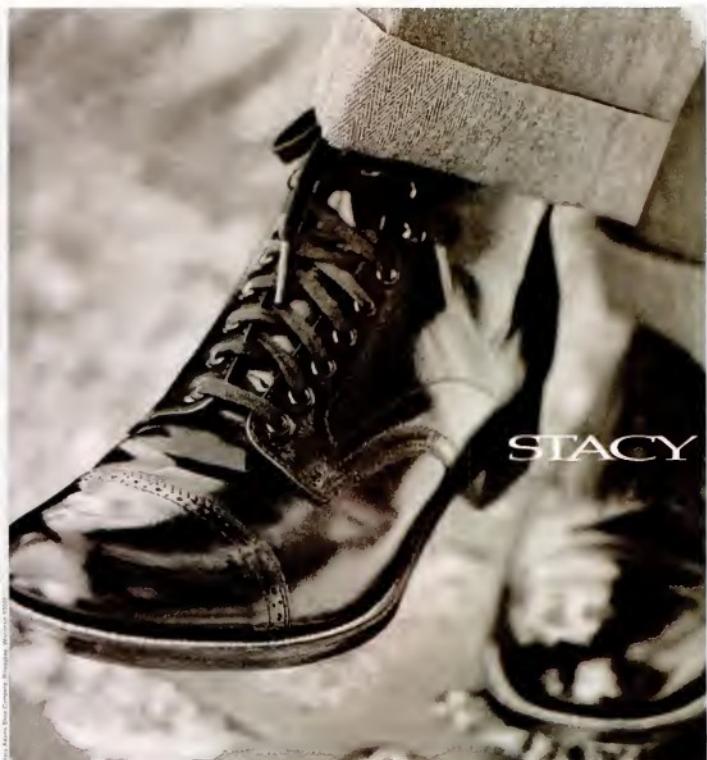


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The Blackspot

VIBEonline reporter the Blackspot hopes that the Notorious B.I.G. and Puffy Combs ("Stakes Is High," page 100) will help put an end to hip hop's bicoastal war. "Puffy isn't feeding into the rumors and threats coming from Tupac, so he hopes they will burn themselves out," he says. The Brooklyn-born Blackspot, who writes VIBE's Ten Years Later and Notes From the Underground columns, is the U.S. correspondent for London's Radio 1 rap show.

Guy Aroch

Shooting the Alfred Hitchcock-inspired story "Film Noir" (page 126) was a challenging experience for Israeli photographer Guy Aroch. "Hitchcock's themes are present everywhere—in film, in photography, in fashion," he says. "We just had to find a new spin. We copied lesser-known scenes from his movies, and went with a '50s look." Aroch has contributed to *Marie Claire*, *Allure*, and *D Magazine*.

Kimi Zabihyan

London-based filmmaker and journalist Kimi Zabihyan says that once she gained Don King's trust ("Rope A Dope," page 148), a new side of the flamboyant promoter surfaced. "I was surprised how political he was and how much he understood the principles of economics," she explains. "I hope that people begin to appreciate



his political importance and come to understand him." The Iranian-born Zabihyan has produced more than 40 investigative documentaries—including several for the BBC—and recently completed *The Yardies*, a feature film about life in the Jamaican ghettos.

Ben Watts

Photographing four star boxers ("Bad Intentions," page 144) was a natural for Ben Watts, who's a huge fan of the sweet science. "It's a very interesting subject, because most boxers have a lot of character punched into them," he says. The English-born Watts—a former boxer himself—claims that all of the pugilists were pleasant, but Riddick Bowe was far and away the most charming: "Riddick was very funny; his personality really came through," Watts has shot for *Nike*, *Mademoiselle*, *Glamour*, and *Australian Vogue*.

Karina Taira

To hear San Francisco-born photographer Karina Taira tell it, there isn't a more accommodating subject than R&B crooner D'Angelo ("The Real Thing," page 106). "He's extremely sultry and sensual, which he tried to project to the camera," she says. "Everything clicked, and he was a team player who was willing to work hard for a good photo." Taira has also contributed to *The New York Times Magazine*, *New York*, *YSB*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Seventeen*.

Freelance writer kris ex wrote the lead review of Nas's sophomore album, *It Was Written* (Revolutions, page 201). He's the music editor of *One Nut* magazine, and writes for *The Source*, *ego trip*, and *Hip Hop Connection*....Photographer/video director Daniela Federici shot the Motown fashion spread ("Dressed for Success," page 176). She's had the likes of Vanessa Williams and Natalie Cole pose for her, and has also directed videos for Mariah Carey and Soul for Real....Joyce E. Davis dug deep into the new sound of gospel music for "Pennies From Heaven" (page 172) and wrote about the Braxtons for Next (page 92). She has contributed to *Essence* and *Black Enterprise*....Fredrick L. McKissack Jr. wrote the Get Up On It essay about the prison industry ("Crime Pays," page 77). He's the author of *Black Diamonds: Story of the Negro Baseball League* (Scholastic) and the editor of the Progressive Media Project, a left-wing wire service.

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ting. There will always be a place for the refugee flavor in hip hop!

*Hamida King
Philadelphia, PA*

The Fugees are the only group that have interested me in the last two years, and your article on them was awesome. They will remain a "permanent one" because of their talent, soul, heart, and obvious love for each other.

Killing Us Softly

I have to give props to Sacha Jenkins for his article about the Fugees ("Ready or Not," June/July). He gives them well-deserved respect, because they are straight up-and-down phat. Learning that they all play their own instruments proved to me that not only is *The Score* the bomb, but the Fugees have set the standard for hip hop this year.

*Chad Unrein
Wichita, KS*

Out of hundreds of rap groups, the Fugees definitely represent the best. Alize and Versace references can get boring—that's why I give the Fugees mad props. I thought I would never stop playing the Notorious B.I.G.'s album *Ready to Die*, but after hearing *The Score* I pronounced Biggie Small dead.

*Bernard Taylor
New Orleans, LA*

Your article on the Fugees was a well-written breath of fresh air. However, I disagree with your unprofessionalism when discussing the Roots and the idea that they may have copied their stage show from the Fugees. They have expanded hip hop to a new dimension by incorporating live instruments and lyrics that inspire hip hop culture. Also, contrary to what you may believe, Digable Planets have not fallen off.

*Toure Folkes
New York, NY*

God bless the Fugees, because they managed to climb the charts without pushing some ol' gun-clapping crap. They deserve all the recognition they're get-

ting. Obviously, he doesn't understand that to know your past is to understand your future.

*James R. Knight
Jamaica, NY*

It's refreshing to see an African-American male in the media who is willing to talk openly about his sexuality, although Dennis Rodman's comments about an apparent obsession with

shouldn't Rodman or any man or woman enjoy his or her sensuality and natural talents to the fullest? Life really is all about balls.

*Ja A. Jahanee, Ph.D.
Savannah, GA*

I used to have respect for Dennis Rodman because he took pride in being himself, but after reading your article I've changed my mind.

Rodman uses his past problems to justify his current negative attitude. He criticizes talented players who could run circles around him on their worst day, instead of settling his beefs face-to-face like a man. VIBE, please do not waste any more ink, paper, or time on tired asses like Dennis Rodman. Seek the real men of the NBA. I hear Grant Hill is available.

*A-B-Ball Fan
Brooklyn, NY*

the sport more interesting to know that the people playing are as human as anyone else.

*Ginger B. Mann
Los Angeles, CA*

There is absolutely no doubt that Dennis Rodman is an integral part of the success the Chicago Bulls have had this

"It's refreshing to see an African-American male in the media who talks about his sexuality. Every audience loves a diva: The music industry has Miss Ross; the NBA has Mr. Rodman."

They're the kind of people you wish were your friends.

*Anita Taylor
Detroit, MI*

I believe that the Fugees serve as positive role models for the hip hop community. Because their music is not just entertainment, and seeks to teach and enlighten its listeners, they get nothing but respect.

*Althea Hill
Atlanta, GA*

Sitting Bull

I have a big problem with the obnoxious statements Dennis Rodman made [The VIBE Q, by Scott Poulson-Bryant, June/July] when he informed readers that he doesn't identify with his African-American culture, and then questioned the purpose of the Million Man March by saying, "I know what things are about; I don't need anyone to preach to me. I know what's goin' on, whether I fuck with the black man or white man." Brothaman needs to check himself. The main purpose of having the Million Man March was to bring a sense of unity, pride, and purpose to our

suicide did raise the level of my concern. Nevertheless, every audience loves a diva, and since the music industry has Miss Ross, the NBA should have Mr. Rodman. Rodman has made exhibitionism marketable—I guess Madonna taught him well.

*Eric Rabem
Berkeley, CA*

Dennis Rodman's I'm-gonna-do-what-I-wanna-do-and-be-how-I-wanna-be attitude may have him going overboard with a bod full of tattoos, outlandish hair color, and a pierced nut sack, but he's still doing what most in our generation (Gen X) fail to do: identifying his own individuality. That trait alone is why I look upon Rodman with a smile and accept him. Dennis does what he has always done since he joined the Bulls: show his ass off!

*Terence Summers
Bluefield, WV*

Dennis Rodman is the Man, because he explores himself in a world where too many people are afraid of being themselves rather than the stereotypical standard. Why



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MC HAMMER DOLL WITH BARBIE DOLLS

MAN WOMAN



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GIEFFEE
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Bernini, Beverly Hills

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season. He is a bit eccentric, but aren't most multimillionaires afforded that luxury? At first, I bought into all the hype surrounding Rodman's colorfully cropped hair, obscene gestures, and romps with Madonna, but soon the gloss wore off and I was able to appreciate the "Rebound Emperor" for who he is—a human being with extraordinary talent and a flair for the dramatic!

Doreen Ambrose—Van Lee
Glen Carbon, IL

Horror Story

Harry Allen's "Little Shop of Horrors" [Start, June/July] really made me sick! I mean, how could such an evil, horrible place like that stay open? What kind of person could even go in there? It would be like walking into the doors of hell. I have respect for David Prichard Hunter, who drove his car through the front window of the [Ku Klux Klan] store, though I'm surprised someone hasn't done something worse than that, like burn the place down. Now somehow needs to drive a car through the store owner, John Howard.

T.F.
Pittsburgh, PA

Oscar Blues

I'm glad that Dianne Houston's not trippin' over the Oscars ["Houston, We Have a Problem" by Greg Tate, Start, June/July]. We do have problems in Hollywood, and until African-American producers, actors, screenwriters, and directors admit that these problems exist, blacks will not be able to move forward. Therefore, in order for us to win prestigious acknowledgments such as Academy Awards, we must first unite! As Ms. Houston said, "The best way to change things is from the inside!" So, Ms. Houston, stay positive and continue to keep it real!

Robert Antonio Williams
Washington, DC

Long, Hot Summer

In your "Summer Jams" article [Revolution, June/July], Chairman Mao gave props to Wu-Tang's Genius for the lines "I'm not caught up in politics / I'm no black activist / On a so-called scholar's dick," but stated that Goodie Mob's conscious lyrics could be susceptible to "preachiness." Why is it that when revolutionary rappers try to awaken our sleeping black people, some critics label them as being preachy, as if it's a bad thing? Considering the violent state of rap music and our self-destructive youth, hip hop could use a bit of

preaching, since fools are obviously not learning at home!

Kaleem Ra-Hashim
Atlanta, GA

Chairman Mao's summation of 2Pac's *All Eyez on Me* for "Summer Jams" left me wondering what CD he was listening to. There may be one or two tracks that didn't hit, but to say the whole CD "goes up in flames" is ludicrous. This has to be 2Pac's best album. May be if Chairman Mao would try and listen to the music without passing judgment on the artist, he could produce a more fair evaluation.

Andrew Daniels
Webster, TX

Boned Up

I'd like to congratulate VIBE for doing a cover story on my favorite rap group, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony ["Bad to the Bone" by Sacha Jenkins, May]. Bone are one of the most creative, unique, and talented young groups to grace the cover of any magazine, and Jenkins was able to really touch on a completely different side of these young brothers. Even though they are extremely successful, giving back to the community that raised them is very important to them. Thank you for giving readers the real deal on those people whose lives are consistently misrepresented by the media.

Nikka Williams
Washington, DC

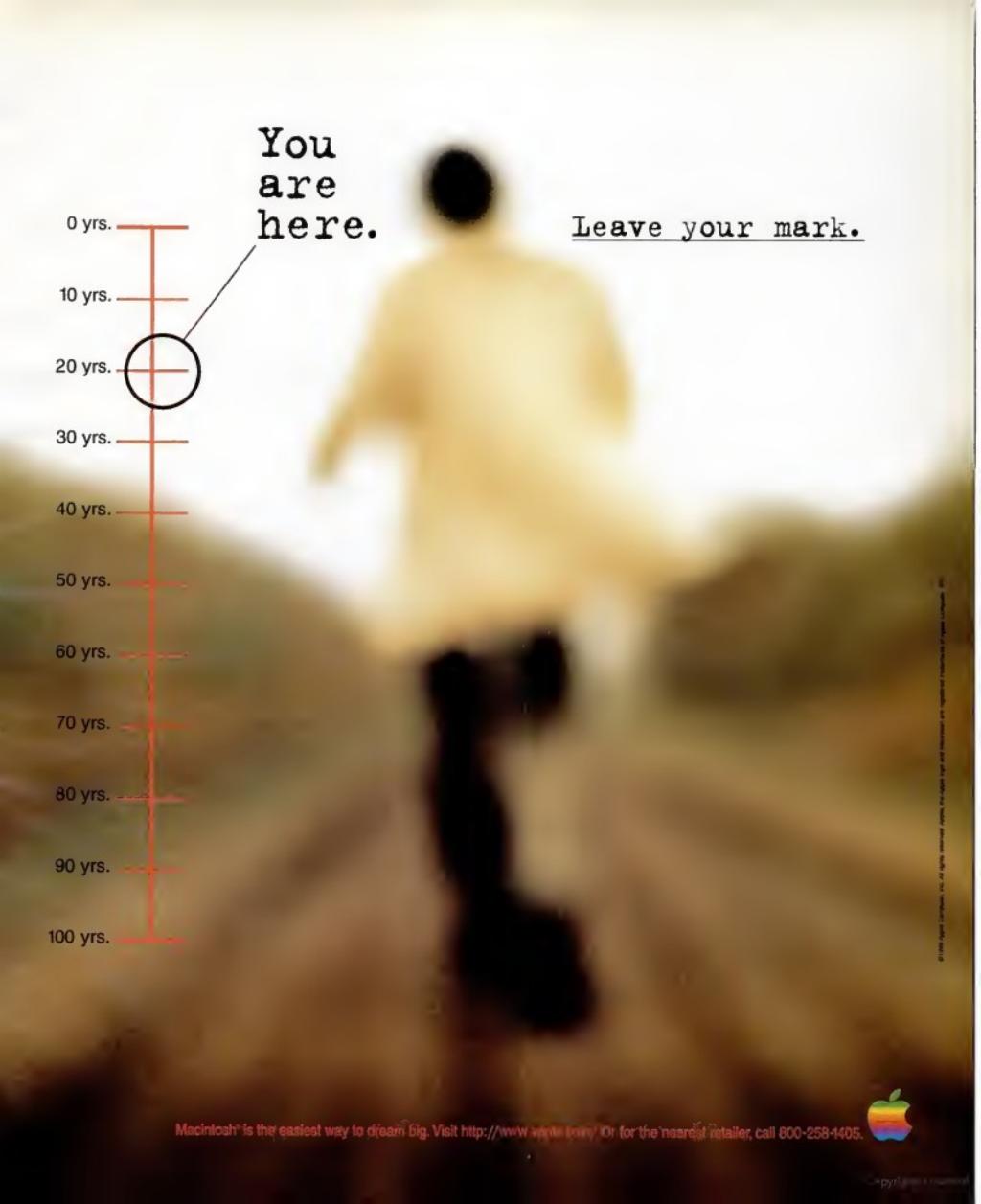
I was glad to see the story on Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, because I am so tired of wack, overrated so-called rappers. Bone have definitely proved to be the best rap group out today. I don't want to hear about Wu-Tang, Mobb Deep, The Dogg Pound, or anybody else, since Bone have sold just as much if not more than all of them. They're the only ones bringing originality to the game, and it's about time they get recognition for their strides.

Tone

Philadelphia, PA

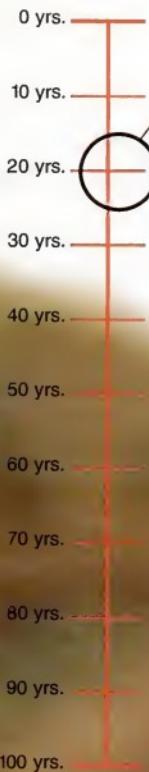
CORRECTION
The photo of the Lost Boys (August Clip) was taken by Tari.

VIBE encourages mail and photographs from readers. Please send letters to VIBE MAIL, 205 Lexington Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York, N.Y. 10016. Or send E-mail to vibe@vibe.com. Send photos to VIBE YOUR BEST SHOT (same address). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Photo submissions will become the property of VIBE and will not be returned.



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Steven Young Esq.

(Also known to toss around the old pigskin now and again)

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Lots of hotel rooms

Pedals for mountain bike - \$129.80



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What Kind of Power We Got?

Cynthia DeLores Tucker, the noisy 68-year-old preacher's daughter, knows that while rappers wield considerable influence, they don't wield power. Power over hip hop, a black art form, is reserved, unjustly, for white people. So she goes directly to white people to settle her differences with black people. Which, ironically, is what I like about Tucker: that by doing this, and aligning herself with William Bennett, the former drug czar, she inadvertently reexplores white-black "coalitions" for the fraud, the zero-sum game, that they are for black people.

What I don't like about Tucker, other than her wicked wigs and turbans, is her sniffling lack of credibility. Besides her history of slumlording (buildings she owned in Philadelphia were shut down by the city as a health hazard to her tenants) and flaunting of her "Honorable Dr." title, Tucker may owe you money: As commonwealth secretary for Pennsylvania in the '70s, she boosted her income, privately pocketing \$6,931 in honoraria, by having state employees—on taxpayers' time—write speeches for her.

Her excuse, when publicly dismissed for her actions? "Maybe it is wrong,

but it is a way of life." Stunning. Isn't that what many so-called "gangsta rappers" say about the criminal deeds they liquefy on their records? At least they write their own speeches.

Today, Tucker's vain middle-class tactics—like getting arrested at the Wiz, attacking rappers in the press, and other junk activities—remind me that we black people really have *pretend power*. Yet in our rank powerlessness, we have created hip hop—an awesome art form—specifically as a response, albeit insufficient, to racism.

In other words, racism—white supremacy—is itself what made hip hop exist; what made it *likely, probable*. Without white supremacy in the equation, hip hop, as a quantity, has absolutely no workable meaning or value.

Hence, outings designed to confront "gangsta rap" without confronting white supremacy first in a systematic, codified way are absolutely doomed to fail, because they do not confront the root cause. Until we do confront the root cause, let them fail. Let them wither and die. Let a thousand "bitches" bloom.

Harry Allen

What happened to Hammer?

Hip hop's best-seller is flat broke

Hammer used to be untouchable. In 1991, *Forbes* estimated his income at \$33 million for that year alone. He had sold 14 million albums, owned his own record label, and lived in a mansion on 12 acres with two swimming pools and a remote-controlled waterfall. He secured endorsement deals with Pepsi and KFC, and even had a Mattel doll—one of Barbie's Celebrity Friends—named in his honor.

But in April, Hammer (real name: Stanley Burrell) confirmed widespread rumors that his empire was crumbling when he filed for federal bankruptcy protection in Oakland. His bankruptcy attorney, Michael Cooper, told a federal court that Hammer had approximately 250 creditors claiming \$13.8 million of the 32-year-old rapper's money. His assets were listed at roughly \$9.7 million, mostly represented by the Fremont, Calif., mansion, which is now on the market for roughly \$7 million.

So where did all the money go? Well, Hammer did live large. He toured with approximately 60 performers, routinely carried 100 people in his backstage entourage, and owned 17 cars. He was also the target of a flood of litigation. According to Cooper, more than 20 lawsuits have been brought against his client, many by friends or associates who may have been hastily promised jobs or money. Cooper would not say how much the suits—a number of which are pending—have cost the rapper so far, but Hammer still owes at least \$484,000 to lawyers.

At least one of the lawsuits could have been avoided.

"There was a silly matter involving his interior decorator," Larry Blake, Hammer's personal attorney, told the *Chicago Tribune*. "Hammer felt he was overcharged and he sued her. She countersued him, and it dragged on for several years." In addition to legal fees, Hammer owes a significant amount of money to American Express, J.C. Penney, and the IRS, as well as \$500,000 to Dallas Cowboys cornerback Deion Sanders, who loaned him money in 1994. Hammer, who initially agreed to an interview with VIBE, later refused comment.

With the remnants of his fortune in limbo, Hammer's future is uncertain. When he signed with Death Row Records in January, CEO Suge Knight said, "We take care of all our artists." But according to a source close to Death Row, the label didn't know the extent of Hammer's money troubles until he filed for bankruptcy. It looks like he won't be making music until his finances are sorted out, which could take as long as a year. By that time, Hammer might be pleading, *Please, don't hurt me.*

josh tyrangiel



MARK LIDDELL

bullets . . .

* GOODIE GETS SAUCED *

In April, 400,000 copies of Goodie Mob's single "Soul Food" were pulled from stores when the McIlhenny Co., manufacturers of Tabasco sauce, charged that the single's cover art infringed on its logo. "It was flattering on one hand," says vice president Paul McIlhenny, "but we have to be diligent about that stuff." Goodie's label, LaFace, also recalled and destroyed all promotional shirts and posters. "It really derailed the single," says a LaFace spokesperson. The group has no plans to rerelease the song with new artwork.



* HIV HOME TEST *

Thanks to Direct Access Diagnostics, soon anyone will be able to take an anonymous HIV test in the privacy of their home. The \$40 Confide kit, available nationwide in early 1997, requires a fingertip blood sample that's applied to a test card and mailed to the DAD laboratory. Test results—as accurate as any hospital's or clinic's—are accessible after seven days via telephone with a keypad code. If necessary, professional counseling is also available. For more information, call 800-THE-TEST.



Backstage Bounty

"...And hold the pork!"

When the Fugees, Cypress Hill, A Tribe Called Quest, Ziggy Marley, Busta Rhymes, and Spearhead roll out this summer on the House of Blues Smokin' Grooves Tour—which covers 31 American cities between July 22 and September 2—they'll be expecting to see a lot more than groupies backstage. Namely, ample food and drink to satisfy their distinct palates. In surveying the request lists they sent promoters across the country, we found that all the groups had one demand in common: no pork! While Tribe, Busta, and the others kept the rest of their catering requirements simple (e.g., Italian cuisine, fresh vegetables, etc.), the least-known group, Spearhead, turned out to be the most high-maintenance. Here are just a few of their more than 50 requests:

- No red meat
- Turkey: sliced—good quality
- No egg salad that sticks up the dressing room
- 2 large bags of nuts: cashews and pistachios
- Lots of ripe fruit, including kiwi and mango
- Cookies: chocolate chip, peanut butter, Oreos
- 1 jumbo bag M&M's with peanuts
- 12 bottles Snapple: 6 lemonade, 6 assorted fruit
- 24 bottles Heineken (export only)
- 12 bottles Newcastle Brown Ale or Guinness
- 1 bottle Baileys
- 1 bottle cognac
- 1 good bottle Merlot or Cabernet
- 1 good bottle Chablis or Chardonnay
- 12 Tylenol tablets

Shani Saxon

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Paid in Full

Madison Avenue cashes in with hip hop

Not long ago, it was unthinkable that you'd see a rapper in a TV commercial or in print ads hawking soda, malt liquor, or sneakers. But now that hip hop has become the dominant soundtrack of our time, savvy advertisers are looking for ways to cash in. More and more, they're turning to urban artists—from Snoop to Chanté Moore—to convince picky Gen X consumers that their products are for real. Here's a review of the most significant spots.



Name: Kurtis Blow

Product: Sprite (1986)

Credentials: Six seminal hip hop albums in six years

Description: Ten years ago, Blow, sporting Jerry curls, reminded us, "Now more than ever, it's Sprite!" Comment: As the first rapper to double as a spokesman, Blow helped turn the Hip Hop Nation against 7Up and opened the gate for a flood of subsequent Sprite ads featuring everyone from Puba to Kris Kross.

Name: MC Hammer

Products: British Knights sneakers (1990), Pepsi (1991), Taco Bell (1991), Kentucky Fried Chicken (1992)

Credentials: Hip hop's best-selling artist ever—before going broke

Description: Four different spots; one Hammer. Lots of parachute pants, running-man dances, too much teeth

Comment: In his pre-Death Row days, Hammer moved merchandise with coonish antics that offended many.

Name: Ice Cube

Product: St. Ides malt liquor (1991)

Credentials: His five platinum solo albums carried gangsta rap through the early '90s.

Description: Cube advised, "Get your girl in the mood quicker, with St. Ides malt liquor."

Comment: The spot's stylish ghetto cinematography was cool—as was Cube, the first hardcore rapper to do an ad—but it can't justify pimping an addictive drug to black youth.



Name: KRS-One

Product: Nike (1996), Sprite (1996)

Credentials: If you don't know who the Teacher is, you're reading the wrong magazine.

Description: KRS informed us that "the revolution is basketball" in the Nike ad and got in the boxing ring with MC Shan for Sprite to prove that the Bridge is still over.

Comment: Rewarding Gil Scott-Heron's "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" to sell kinks bonders on blasphemy, but the reuniting of KRS and Shan made up for it.

Name: Method Man

Product: Reebok (1996), St. Ides Special Brew (1996)

Credentials: The platinum-selling Johnny Blaze was the first of the new wave of roughneck rappers to be invited to do commercials.

Description: In print ads, Meth sported Reebok as he asked, "How do you walk your dogs?" For St. Ides, he teamed up with Redman to push McKenzie River's fruity alcoholic drinks.

Comment: Reebok's ads had style, but hawking booze to kids is a no-no, especially since the Special Brew bears a striking resemblance to the company's nonalcoholic Crooked I fruit beverages.

bullets . . .

• CLOWN PRINCE

Producer Prince Paul—best known for the amusing game show sequences on *De La Soul's* debut, *3 Feet High and Rising*—is branching out. He recently released *Psycho-analysis [What Is It?]*, a compilation of comic sketches laid over hip hop beats. What motivated Paul, who's also worked with Gravediggaz and Vernon Reid, to do a comedy album? "I slowly feel myself getting lost in the pressures of trying to make that hit record," he writes in the liner notes. Laughter, after all, is the best medicine.



Richard Schmid

• JACKSON MURDER MYSTERY

In a story straight from a John Grisham novel, Tito Jackson is engaged in some real-life drama. He has filed a lawsuit against L.A. businessman Donald J. Bohana for his alleged involvement in the 1994 drowning death of Jackson's ex-wife, Delores V. Jackson (mother and manager of 3T). Jackson's attorney R. Brian Oxman says Delores suffered 58 injuries—several of which he claims are the result of strangulation—before suffocating in Bohana's pool. Nelson Atkins, Bohana's attorney, calls the allegations "garbage."

Ask
the
Rap
Bandit

Everything you always wanted to know about hip hop but were afraid to ask

Q: What's the real reason Martin went nuts at that L.A. intersection? D.S., NEW ORLEANS, LA

A: Don't know, but only minutes before, I approached him on the street and said, "Hey, Arsenio—can I get your autograph?"

Q: Why is everyone coming down on KRS-One about his Nike and Sprite ads? At least he wasn't selling beer. C.T.W., CINCINNATI, OH

A: I hear you. I love those commercials. They were the first time KRS was able to make a point in less than 30 seconds.

Q: My husband has an annoying habit of rapping aloud every time a good song comes on the car radio. I can't take it anymore. Any suggestions? C.Y., CHICAGO, IL

A: Fantasize that your husband is a current rap star, and that all those good songs on the radio are his. That's what Ice-T's wife does.

Q: Are Doctor Dre and Ed Lover planning any other movies with an all-star cast similar to Who's the Man? K.M., NEWARK, NJ

A: Nope. As a pair, Ed and Dre only get "one" of everything: one movie, one TV show, one album, one book, one coffin.

Q: Don't you think Heather B. should be saluted for selling records based on her musical ability rather than her body? L.R., BOULDER, CO

A: There's no question she's dope, but Heather B. saying she doesn't use sex appeal to sell records is about as noble as Left Eye saying "Only you can prevent forest fires."

Q: Is there anything wackier than rappers who get onstage and use the same old tired lines like "Throw your hands in the air" and "Make money, make money"? B.A.C., MIAMI, FL

A: Yeah, rappers who waste valuable concert time to ask "Is Brooklyn in the house?" when they're performing in L.A.

Got a question about hip hop? Hit me off at: The Rap Bandit, P.O. Box 48382, Philadelphia, PA 19144, or rapbandit@vibe.com.

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Shhhhhh! Chino XL has a nasty little secret



start

When Chino XL's debut album, *Here to Save You All*, was released in April, the New Jersey rapper turned more than a few heads by dissing everyone from Miles Davis to The Dogg Pound. Then the buzz died down. Until, that is, late one night when we left the CD on and discovered—20 minutes after the last song—a secret track. Programmed at number 60 on the CD (keep pressing your “forward-skip” button), the untitled, two-minute track is a shamelessly vulgar joke that would make Howard Stern blush.

The skit juxtaposes numerous samples from the O.J. Simpson trial—Ron Goldman’s father calling Johnnie Cochran “a disgrace to human beings,” Nicole Brown Simpson’s 911 phone call...over a recurrent sitcom-type laugh track. “Let’s not forget who the real victim is here,” Chino says near the end, affecting a serious tone. “Nicole Simpson got her throat slit...Hal Hal Hal!” Chino, who claims it’s all in good fun, isn’t worried about offending anyone. “I do care, but then I don’t,” he says. “The best thing was to just look at the whole O.J. drama and laugh. Who can believe it really happened?” Joseph V. Tirella

bullets.....



BIBLE THUMPIN'

Reverend Run (Joseph Simmons of Run-D.M.C.) has taken his hip hop gospel to the airwaves. “I believe in spreading my message about Christ through rap,” he says. Every weekday morning on New York’s WOHT (Hot 97), Rev Run preaches a five-minute daily affirmation with verses from the Bible. His sermons focus on helping people overcome crisis and aiding those in need of spiritual inspiration. “We are living in troubled times,” says Run. “We need to uplift ourselves through love and Christ.”

sound check

Bobbito Garcia plays the tracks, Russell Simmons states the facts

I started working in the record industry as a messenger at Def Jam back in '89. Russell Simmons took a liking to me in my first staff meeting when I told him that not only would I not buy LL's *Walking With a Panther* album but that I wouldn't even tape it. Soon after, I got promoted to A&R and street promotions. Russell talks his ass off about himself and his projects, but I never minded him dominating our conversations 'cause I've learned from his all-knowing wisdom.

• RUN-D.M.C.—“Darryl & Joe (Krush-Groove 3)”

B: You should know this.

R: [No response]

B: “And his name is Jay / I run the ace to the deuce and Jay is the troy.” You should know this!

R: I forgot the motherfucking name! It's the second album, man. I produced it! I got writer's credit and all that shit.

• DARRYL & JOE (Krush-Groove 3)

B: You should know this.

R: [No response]

B: “And his name is Jay / I run the ace to the deuce and Jay is the troy.” You should know this!

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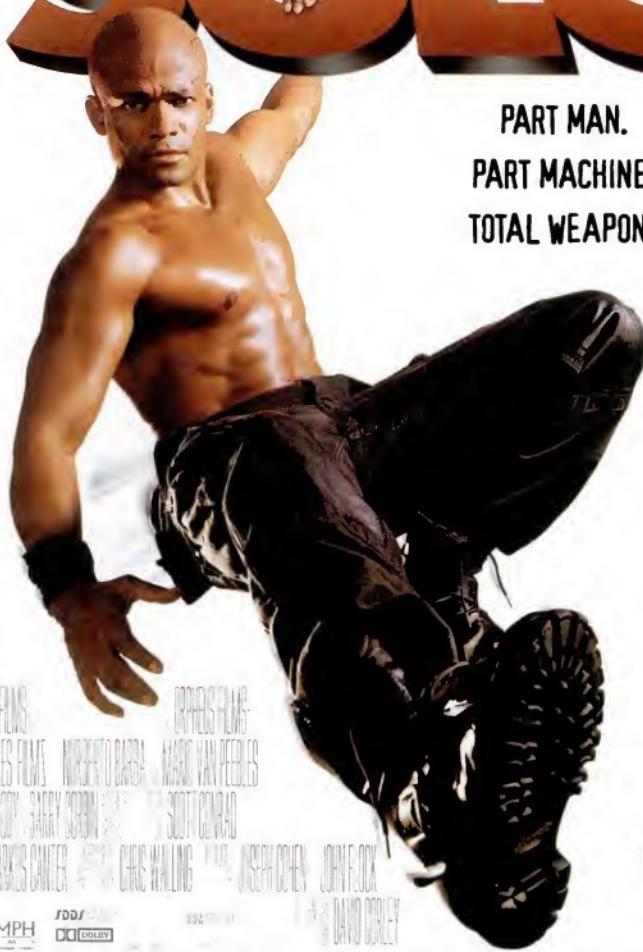
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MARIO VAN PEEBLES **Solo**



PART MAN.
PART MACHINE.
TOTAL WEAPON.

TRIUMPH FILMS

MARIO VAN PEEBLES FILM: NORBERTO BARBA MARIO VAN PEEBLES

ADRIEN BRODY, RANDY DOUGLASS, SCOTT CONRAD

CHRIS LAMBERT, CHRIS WHITING, JOSEPH COHEN, JOHNIE DICK

DAVID CORLEY, DAVID CORLEY

TRIUMPH

JDDS
DOLBY

ON AUGUST 23, PREPARE

JOHNNIE DICK PRODUCTION

Solo WILLIAM SAYER

Machine CHRISTOPHER FRANKE

Weapon ROBERT MASON

Norberto Barba NORBERTO BARBA

TO GO SOLO!

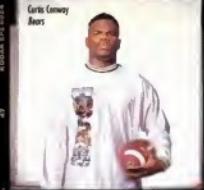
HOUSE OF PAIN.



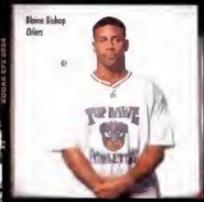
TRUTH CRUSHED TO EARTH WILL RISE AGAIN

Are you
Top Dawg?

Get On
Top!



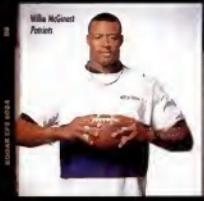
Curtis Conway
Oilers



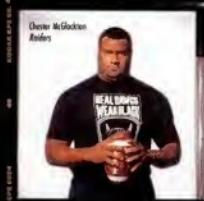
Wayne Bishop
Oilers



Mark McNeilly
Saints



Willie McGaugh
Patriots



Chester McClellan
Raiders

1-800-903-DAWG

Magic Booth #'s 2769-2771 & 2869-2871
ASR Booth #'s 2101, 2103, 2200, 2202

Droppin' Science

Getting schooled by hip hop's finest

Ring the bell! School's back in session, sucka, and now that Principal Hammer has signed to Death Row Records, a trip to the office could have frightening ramifications. Step around the electric chair insignia and have a seat, please. You've got a busy first day of classes.

- 8:00-8:15 Homeroom: Ice Cube tells the class about the crack he sold during "My Summer Vacation."
- 8:15-9:00 English: The Teacher, KRS-One, edutains in the art of "Poetry."
- 9:00-9:45 Chemistry: Large Professor lectures on the pleasures of "Breaking Atoms."
- 9:45-10:30 Algebra: The Original Human Beat Box explains equations like "D.E.F.=Doug E. Fresh."
- 10:30-11:15 Sex-ed: Too Short cracks jokes about the cheerleaders' pom-poms and instructs us in the basics of "Pimpology."
- 11:15-12:00 Poli-sci: Rakim teaches the principles of democracy with "Eric B. for President."
- 12:00-12:45 Lunch: Make sure you line up in front of the Fat Boys, 'cause it's "All You Can Eat."
- 12:45-1:30 Gym: Coach Kurtis Blow leads the class through the fundamentals of "Basketball."
- 1:30-2:15 Spanish: Cypress Hill's B-Real conjugates crazy verbs in the "Latin Lingo."
- 2:15-3:00 Shop class: Stumbling out of a smoke-filled faculty lounge, Mr. Redman holds a seminar on "How to Roll a Blunt." David Bry

Whitewashed?

Over the years, dictionaries, like the rest of us, have struggled to define *hip hop*. Just when we thought they were getting it right, the latest Webster's *New World College Dictionary*—taking its cue from New York's Metropolitan Transit Authority—eliminates all traces of graffiti, offering a sanitized version of the term.

etc. [1890-1900] **hip-hop** (hip'hop), n. Slang. RAP MUSIC. [1985-90]
[prob. a back-formation on HIP-HOP (n.) + -HOP] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edition, 1991

hip-hop (hip'hop) n. 1. (orig. uncert.) a style of music, dance, etc., originally by inner-city youths of the 1980's, that includes rap music, graffiti, and break dancing; also: an element or art form prevalent within this subculture. 2. (prob. a back-formation on HIP-HOP (n.) + -HOP) n. 1. reaching to the top of the head. 2. (orig. uncert.) a subculture esp. of inner-city youths whose amusements include rap music, graffiti, and break dancing; also: an element or art form prevalent within this subculture. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edition, 1991

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-Webster's New World College Dictionary, 1996

bullets...



MINGUS'S REVENGE

After years of legal battles to prevent record bootleggers from pimping her estate, Sue Mingus, the fourth wife of the late jazz bassist Charles Mingus, has created Revenge Records. On May 14, Revenge released its first album, titled *Revenge!*—a 1964 Mingus concert recorded in Paris. Sue, who's been known to snatch bootleg CDs from record stores, plans to release two Mingus CDs every year. "We're going to reissue the best stolen Mingus on our label, underprice the bootleggers, and put them out of business," she says.

Studio Time

In the lab with Ill Al Skratch

Sitting behind the mixing board in Manhattan's Unique Recording Studios, Ill Al Skratch, along with producer L.G. and guest vocalist Gina Thompson, are listening to a playback of "Gamin'," from the duo's sophomore album, *Keep It Movin'* (due out in September). They're pondering where to place Thompson's vocals. "L.G. was the one who decided that a female on the track would be a good thing," says Ill. So they immediately thought of their labelmate Thompson, whose debut *Nobody Does It Better* dropped in July. "She did her part in one take," he adds, "but we've brought her back to enhance it a bit."

Following the formula of their 1994 debut disc, *Creep wit' Me*, the New York duo recruited help to flesh out certain songs. Christopher Williams, the prince of urban romance, also laid down vocals for "Gamin'," while Yo Yo checked



in a few weeks ago to do her thing on a track called "Dance wit' Me." L.G. (who's worked with Chubb Rock and part-time rapper Shaquille O'Neal) feels that outside artists can help broaden an album's appeal. "It's my goal to create tracks that are mainstream radio records, but with a street edge," he says.

The music blares from a pair of booming Yamaha speakers as Thompson gears up to record a new set of lyrics. Ill is on the floor rummaging through a pile of vinyl records—Mother's Finest, a Maze album, an old Boogie Down Productions joint—searching for samples for a song they will record tomorrow. "You know, we're just trying to create something different here," says Al, as Thompson signals that she's ready. "A lot of people were thinking that we got dropped or something, but we've been working, man. Working hard."

Michael A. Gonzales



POP THAT LOOCHE

Since filing for bankruptcy last year, Luther Campbell hasn't been as rich as he wants to be. But he's recovering. He's reorganized Luke Records under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy law. The restructuring has been costly, however. Campbell's former bandmates now own the 2 Live Crew name, and he sold his entire catalog to Lil' Joe Records. But Campbell already has two new groups in the studio, where he has a habit of making platinum out of nothing.

**ENGINEERED TO THE
EXACT SPECIFICATIONS OF
CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETES.**



XXL

ENGINEERED TO THE
EXACT SPECIFICATIONS OF
CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETES.



DEION SANDERS

#21 CORNERBACK/RECEIVER

BIRTHDATE: 8/9/67

6'1", 198 LBS.

WEARS AN AUTHENTIC DALLAS COWBOYS™ JERSEY

2 SUPER BOWL RINGS

4 PRO BOWLS

1994 DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

2-TIME COLLEGE ALL-AMERICAN

PASS INTERCEPTIONS

YEAR	NO.	YDS.	AVG.	LONG	TD
1989	5	52	10.4	22	0
1990	3	153	51.0	82	2
1991	6	319	19.8	55	1
1992	3	105	35.0	55	0
1993	7	91	13.0	41	0
1994	2	303	50.5	85	3
1995	2	34	17.0	34	0
TOTALS	32	857	26.6	237	6

TACKLES

YEAR	Solo
1989	28
1990	31
1991	35
1992	47
1993	47
1994	35
1995	22
TOTAL	222

POSTSEASON

YEAR	NO.	YDS.	AVG.	LONG	TD
1991	1	31	31.0	31	0
1994	2	15	7.5	15	0
1995	1	12	12.0	12	0
TOTALS	4	58	14.5	31	0

YEAR	Solo
1991	6
1994	8
1995	5
TOTAL	15

1. Follow instructions on the other side

BACK

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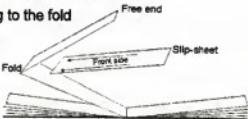


Back

1. Follow instructions on the other side

Foldout slip-sheet

1. Open the foldout page
2. Insert this sheet with
 1. Front side touching the foldout page
 2. Arrow pointing to the fold
3. Slice the folded edge
4. Close the page



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3. Slice the folded edge
4. Close the page

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MARK ALLEN
TRIATHLETE
BIRTHDATE: 1/12/58
6'0", 157 LBS.
WEARS THE CLIMA-F.I.T.® JACKET

1995 IRONMAN, 1ST
1993 IRONMAN, 1ST
1993 WORLD LONG DISTANCE CHAMP
1992 IRONMAN, 1ST
1992 WORLD LONG DISTANCE CHAMP
1991 IRONMAN, 1ST
1991 WORLD LONG DISTANCE CHAMP
1990 IRONMAN, 1ST
1990 WORLD LONG DISTANCE CHAMP
1989 IRONMAN, 1ST
1989 WORLD LONG DISTANCE CHAMP





APPAREL
NIKE

ANDRE AGASSI
RIGHT-HANDED
BIRTHDATE: 4/29/70
5'11", 165 LBS.
WEARS THE DRI-F.I.T.® LONG-SLEEVE POLO

3 GRAND SLAM TITLES
32 CAREER SINGLES TITLES
HIGHEST SINGLES RANKING: 1 (APRIL 10, 1995)
1995 ATP TOUR'S MOST CONSISTENT PLAYER
RANKED #1 FOR 30 WEEKS
1995 AUSTRALIAN OPEN WINNER
1994 U.S. OPEN WINNER
1992 WIMBLEDON WINNER



MARK ALLEN
TRIATHLETE
BIRTHDATE: 1/12/58
6'0", 157 LBS.

WEARS THE CLIMA-F.I.T.® JACKET

- 1995 IRONMAN, 1st
- 1993 IRONMAN, 1st
- 1993 WORLD LONG DISTANCE CHAMP
- 1992 IRONMAN, 1st
- 1992 WORLD LONG DISTANCE CHAMP
- 1991 IRONMAN, 1st
- 1991 WORLD LONG DISTANCE CHAMP
- 1990 IRONMAN, 1st
- 1990 WORLD LONG DISTANCE CHAMP
- 1989 IRONMAN, 1st
- 1989 WORLD LONG DISTANCE CHAMP





TEAM XXL

ENGINEERED TO THE
EXACT SPECIFICATIONS OF
CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETES



DEION SANDERS

#21 CORNERBACK/RECEIVER

BIRTHDATE: 8/9/67

6'1", 198 LBS.

WEARS AN AUTHENTIC DALLAS COWBOYS® JERSEY

2 SUPER BOWL RINGS

4 PRO BOWLS

1994 DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

2-TIME COLLEGE ALL-AMERICAN

PASS INTERCEPTIONS

YEAR	NO.	YDS.	AVG.	LONG	TD	TACKLES	YEAR	SOL.
1989	5	52	10.4	22	0	1989	28	
1990	3	153	51.0	82	2	1990	51	
1991	6	119	19.8	55	1	1991	35	
1992	3	105	35.0	55	0	1992	48	
1993	7	91	13.0	41	0	1993	77	
1994	6	305	50.5	81	3	1994	35	
1995	2	34	17.0	34	0	1995	22	
TOTALS	32	857	26.8	93	6	TOTAL	222	

POSTSEASON

PASS INTERCEPTIONS

YEAR	NO.	YDS.	AVG.	LONG	TD	TACKLES	YEAR	SOL.
1991	1	31	31.0	31	0	1991	6	
1994	2	15	7.5	15	0	1994	4	
1995	1	12	12.0	12	0	1995	8	
TOTALS	4	58	14.5	31	0	TOTAL	23	



A P P A R E L



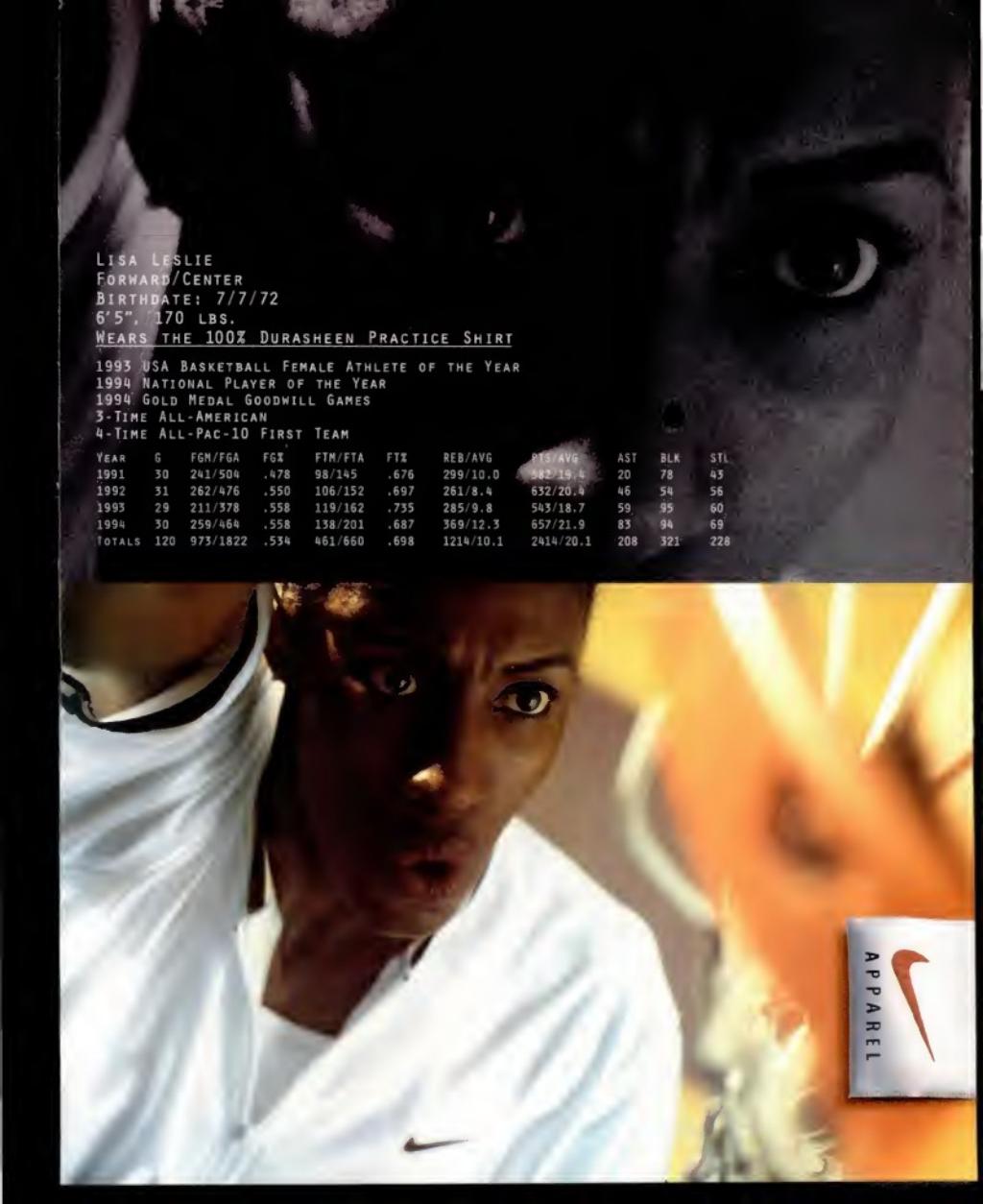


GABRIELLE REECE
POSITION: MIDDLE BLOCKER
BIRTHDATE: 1/6/70
6'3", 168 LBS.
WEARS THE DRI-F.I.T.® BRA TOP

1995 OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
1995 LEAGUE KILLS LEADER
1994 OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
1994 MOST IMPROVED PLAYER OF THE YEAR
1994 LEAGUE KILLS LEADER
1993 MOST VALUABLE PLAYER
1993 LEAGUE KILLS LEADER AND BLOCKS LEADER

YEAR	G	K	B	D	AC	SE	HE	ATT	TA	K%	H%	KPG
1995	32	227	53	44	10	28	113	291	591	.384	.183	7.1
1994	38	454	55	77	12	26	122	420	1196	.386	.276	11.9
1995	48	482	83	79	4	21	11	411	1064	.453	.292	10.0
TOTALS	118	1163	191	200	75	75	446	1282	2851	.408	.266	9.9





LISA LESLIE
FORWARD/CENTER
BIRTHDATE: 7/7/72
6'5", 170 LBS.
WEARS THE 100% DURASHEEN PRACTICE SHIRT

1993 USA BASKETBALL FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

1994 NATIONAL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

1994 GOLD MEDAL GOODWILL GAMES

3-TIME ALL-AMERICAN

4-TIME ALL-PAC-10 FIRST TEAM

YEAR	G	FGM/FGA	FG%	FTM/FTA	FT%	REB/AVG	PTS/AVG	AST	BLK	STL
1991	30	241/504	.478	98/145	.676	299/10.0	8.2/19.4	20	78	45
1992	31	262/476	.550	106/152	.697	261/8.4	6.2/20.4	46	54	56
1993	29	211/378	.558	119/162	.735	285/9.8	5.3/18.7	59	95	60
1994	30	259/464	.558	138/201	.687	369/12.3	6.7/21.9	83	94	69
TOTALS	120	973/1822	.534	461/660	.698	1214/10.1	2414/20.1	208	321	228



1. Follow instructions on the other side

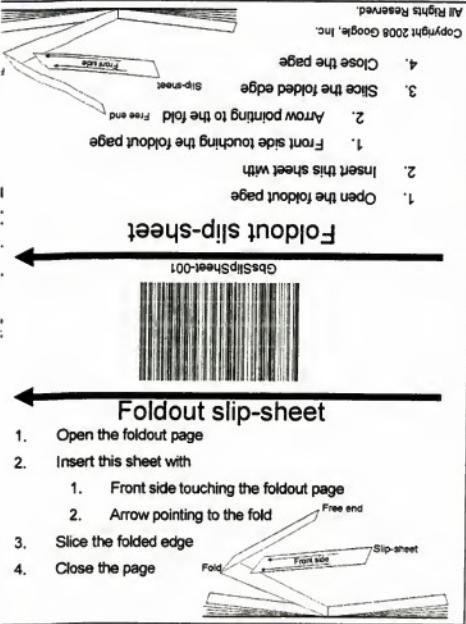
BACK

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Back

1. Follow instructions on the other side



YO, YOYO

Advice from an intelligent black woman

I'm a 20-year-old promiscuous woman and want to know if that's a bad thing. Don't get me wrong—I don't have sex with everybody, and I protect myself at all times. But men have been enjoying this behavior for ages. I don't do it to get back at men, nor do I consider myself a ho. I'm just a person who loves to have sex.

LINDA BONNER
CHICAGO, IL



Dear Linda:

Enjoying sex and being promiscuous are two different things. You should always respect your body and remember that you don't have to lay down to be strong. Sometimes sex is used to mask a self-esteem problem. You said you're "not a ho," but maybe you should check the definitions of the words *promiscuous* and *ho*. Because if it walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck...then maybe it's a duck.

I'm a white female who has always dated black guys. I have nothing against any race—I'm just more attracted to African-American men. Over the years, people have given me trouble about my preference; they say it's wrong and that I should stick to my own color. My heart tells me it's not wrong, because we are all God's children. Should I stick to my heart and dreams, or listen to others just so I don't have to be called a "nigger lover"?

MELINDA CHRISTIAN
LUCKIN, TX

Dear Melinda:

In life you have to do what makes you happy. People will always have their opinions and prejudices, regardless of your preferences. But if you feel good about whom you choose to date, stick to your heart and dreams. Then you don't ever have to ask for anyone's approval.

I saw the movie Menace II Society. I tried to understand it, but I realized that there are certain things that I couldn't. I mean, how can a man kill another man just to get his car? They're supposed to be brothers, but they are killing each other over the most stupid reasons. I could never do that to anybody. I know that black people have had a very horrible past, and the present is not sweet. But being angry is still not an excuse to kill a brother (or sister)!

VESNA STANOVNIK
HORJUL P.V., SLOVENIA

Dear Vesna:

There are all kinds of wars going on all over the world from Bosnia to Israel to South-Central L.A. Because the war in the inner cities of America is not a political war or a religious war, the media and the "powers that be" tend to dismiss it more readily. They don't realize that we have our own war going on right here! Not all blacks are engaging in that behavior, but some African-Americans in our country are killing one another over economic and poverty issues. But hopefully, one day soon politicians will address these real problems.

Need some intelligent advice?

Write to: YO, YOYO, c/o VIBE, 205 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.
Please include return address and telephone number.

Missing Bay Area rapper's baby kidnapped

Just as Bay Area rapper Young Lay's national debut *Black 'N Dangerous* (Atlantic) was about to drop, tragedy struck. On May 17, his girlfriend of two years, Daphne Boyden, was murdered and then burned in her Vallejo home, and the couple's four-week-old son, Le-Zhan, was abducted. Eyewitnesses told Valley police that two young women were seen leaving the house with a blanketed bundle shortly before firefighters arrived.

"[Boyden] wasn't the violent type," says Lay, who just last year was shot in the head during an attempted carjacking. "I can't see why anybody would do something like this." The story aired one week later on Fox TV's *America's Most Wanted*, which showed a police sketch of the two suspects and a picture of the baby. At press time, there were no arrests and the baby was still missing. "I just hope Le-Zhan has a safe return," says Lay. "Whoever did it—please, just bring him home safe."

Joseph V. Tirella

Say What!?

"When rap comes on, I leave the room."

—Martha Reeves (of Martha and the Vandellas), on why rappers should be banned from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

Etc....Etc....Etc....



A new Dr. Dre album has hit the charts...sorta. *First Round Knock Out* is the second compilation of pre-Chronic, Dre-produced tracks released by California indie label Triple X Records. Highlights include Michel'le's "Nicety," the unreleased D.O.C. cut "Bridgette," and the classic Snoop vehicle "Deep Cover"....Tap dancer Savion Glover's Broadway hit *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk* brought home four Tony Awards, including one for Glover for Best Choreography....What's the No. 1 album in Chicago land? R. Kelly? Nope. How about Chicago Bulls' *Greatest Hits*, a CD of sound bites covering

everything from Michael Jordan's selection at the 1984 draft to the team's many championship celebrations? The price is \$10.72 (to commemorate their 72-10 season)...BET is refusing to show MeShell NdegéOcello's video for her controversial song "Lèvitique: Faggot," even though it's getting airplay on the Box, MTV, and VH1....June Playboy Playmate Karin Taylor was scheduled to appear in Prince's, or 2Pac's, or whoever's, video for "Dinner With Delores." But after learning that the script had her laying on a large bed and grabbing for a condom, Taylor politely pulled out.

In the MIX

'Nuff Respect

start

Some folks have juice simply because they exist. **1.** Singer/producer Angela Winbush and husband Ronald Isley of the Isley Brothers—who are still making beautiful music together after six years—are all teeth following an exciting appearance in Nashville. **2.** Talk about strange collaborations! Poet Maya Angelou (left) and singer-songwriters Ashford & Simpson have an album together due in September. Their jam at ASCAP's tribute to the couple was a delicious taste of what's to come. **3.** Too Short—who also runs his own label—knows he's the Man while shopping at Atlanta's Black Expo U.S.A. **4.** Hopefully this doesn't mean that Andre Harrell, president and CEO of Motown, is joining the ranks of other young execs who'd rather perform than sit behind a desk. **5.** Maybe Slick Rick was locked up too long, but someone really needs to tell him that nowadays, less is more. **6.** At a farewell party to that '70s playground of decadence Studio 54, Gloria Gaynor belts out her disco anthem "I Will Survive." The famous nightclub didn't fare as well—it was bulldozed shortly after. **7.** A somber Heavy D learns an important lesson in the bathroom. Don't be depressed, Heavy! It still stinks, even if you are the head of a label. **8.** Former Def Jam partners Rick Rubin and Russell Simmons never feel the need to dress up—even if it's for a dinner in honor of Phat Farm, held at Georgia in L.A. (Apparently, Rick doesn't see any reason not to look like a psycho murderer, either.) **9.** A true power couple: Karyn White and husband Terry Lewis act like newlyweds at a Perspective Records showcase at N.Y.C.'s Tramps. **10.** Jazz great Lionel Hampton does his thing on the vibes at Harlem's Apollo Theatre. **11.** Every man's fantasy, Pam Grier—the original Foxy Brown—at N.Y.C.'s Planet Hollywood. **12.** Former heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield graciously donates his boxing gloves to the Official All Star Cafe in N.Y.C. **13.** Roberta Flack sang "Killing Me Softly With His Song" back in 1973—before the Fugees' Lauryn Hill was even born. At the Manhattan Plaza Theatre, she shows why she'll always be revered. *Shani Saxon*



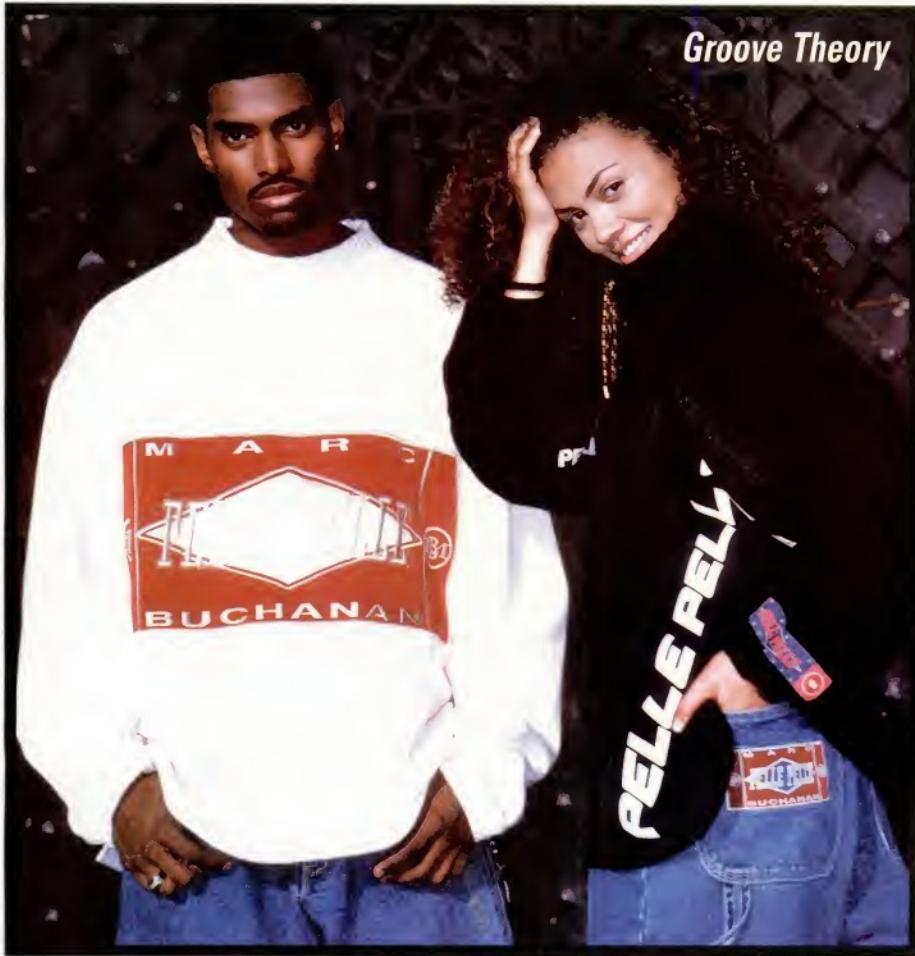
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Groove Theory



art director: Bernard G. Jacobs / photo: Jerry Jack

PELLE PELLE

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Yassa

In the Mix Too Yes, Yes, Y'all

start

1. Yes, that's Dove of De La Soul on a mechanical bull for their "Stakes Is High" video. Apparently, stakes ain't the only thing that's high.
2. Common, who always represents Chi-Town lovely, hangs out at Club Prestige during Atlanta's Freaknik.
3. Quindon, the voice on that hot single "It's You That's on My Mind," reluctantly removes the celebrity shades at Atlanta's Roxy club.
4. Rapper/singer Smooth, performing at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta, has officially left the bodysuit/baggy-jeans style behind and gone for a more chic, stuffed-Hefty-bag look.
5. Puff Johnson, at the Impact convention's MCA showcase held in Nashville, knows that the cave girl look will always keeps folks staring.
6. It ain't hard to tell from the looks on their faces that two of rap's best new female artists, Bahamadia and Heather B., are getting nothing but love at Impact.
7. Toni's Barbie-doll-like baby sisters (left to right), Tamar, Trina, and Towanda—simply known as the Braxtons—make the rounds with two members of Art N' Soul.
8. A prostitute turned celebrity Divine Brown proudly shows off her new erotic video. Wonder if the tape will leave Hugh Grant wishing he could run black—oops—back to Miss Divine?
9. Apparently Busta Rhymes thinks Q-Tip's stage time is up at a recent performance at New York City's Tramps.
10. LL. Cool J makes a rare appearance with Simone, his wife and the mother of his children, at the American Music Awards held in Los Angeles.
11. Dancehall star Buju Banton has everyone on their feet during an uplifting performance at N.Y.C.'s Paramount Theater.
12. Ah, the joys of parenthood: Proud mommy Joi (who's making noise with her single "I Believe") and daddy Gipp (from the Goodie MoB) are both glowing at the Too Short album release party in Atlanta.
13. A steady diet of mashed-up bananas keeps tap dancer extraordinaire Savion Glover on his feet all day. Who knew?

S.S.



KOOL

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

Job Korps: Labor Pains

I shoulda stayed in Job Korps
And now I'm an outlaw...
—Ghost Face Killer

To all the young university grads, congratulations! Now what are you gonna do? Graduate school comes next, huh? Great! What will you be studying? Do you have a second choice? How many years will you invest in school? And then what?

You say you've got big ideas? Our motto is don't talk about it, be about it. But don't slip. It's rough in the beginning, kid. Matter of fact, it pretty much stays that way until we retire or die.

So you want more? Well, get ready for the rough. How many months has it been—four? And ya still can't find a job? EBS (elementary business school) rule No. 1: Try the Yellow Book. Yeah, the B to B. For people like us who can barely afford to eat, let alone go on interviews, it's a fast and inexpensive way to get information. If you like sitting on the couch, then you can sit there and call each of those ads until you get a solid lead. Let your fingers do the walking. It beats masturbating on an empty stomach. Another handy trick is to go to your local library and check the job information listings. They should give you information on jobs in the community, plus the lines are shorter than at unemployment. But if punching the clock doesn't cut it, you can round up a few investors and start doing for self.

As boss of your own operation, it's time to take charge, take chances, and take responsibility for improving your financial situation. In today's world, you've got to have a plan B (which stands for "backup") in order to obtain anything close to financial security. However, if you don't have an A-team to begin with, financial security can seem like an impossible dream that slowly becomes a nightmare. With the budgets at most small businesses, companies, and conglomerates drying up, we got to work three times as hard to get in the game.

Most young people (and a good many older folks) have trouble maintaining when life's daily pressures start to take their toll. But you can't read about the revolution in college, then walk out into the real world of experience and be unsympathetic to its struggle. The trick these days is getting paid without sacrificing your integrity.

To find the answers to life's questions, first you need to make a list of the things you love to do and do well. Take personal inventory, listing your weaknesses and your strengths. After that, take stock of your projected company (its assets and liabilities). In order to get a solid education in whatever field you desire, you'll want to develop your own

newspaper. Now I act as a liaison between Chico and the Millionaire, working with men like Chris Blackwell (Island Records) and Hollywood's black mogul, Quincy Jones! I did the whole dime, fighting for the rights of the underdog, addressing issues from the banning of weapons in city schools to the lack of fresh toilet paper in the

who are too boring to bring on change.

That's where we come in. Scores settled, wrongs righted, truth told, and problems solved—all courtesy of young adults in your age group. That's right, we're ThaJustice League! To defend and protect the poor and oppressed, just give respect to us. We're not selling anything, just bringing the information to you, using all the Mott's we've got. Our representatives are the best at what they do, and that's continually fighting for the space to do things our way. And you know how we do.

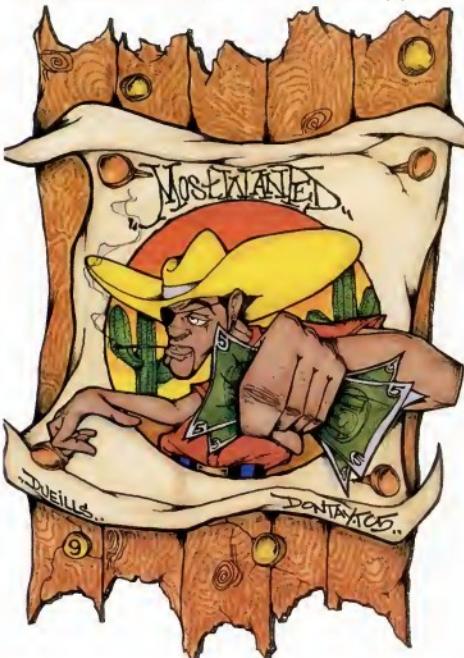
Each month, ThaJustice League will: Provide our supporters with the best legal insider trading info and tips on entrepreneurial advisories. Highlight books and classes on self "n" business awareness. List work expos for seasonal and long-term employment. Offer labor rights advice for employees with legitimate beefs.

Look to us for job search competitions, great cafés and restaurants for networking, fun and creative fashion ideas for the office, and lots more! I have researchers on my team who will bring you the business on the reg.

As consigliere, I say, Let's go tell it on the mountain and then post it on the cyberspace bulletin board! Write or check in at our Web site (<http://www.vibe.com>) to get the latest in self-empowerment. If you're sick of the bull**@#%, get with a crew that'll do *@#%! Write to:

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board of advisers, seasoned veterans who can share secrets for dealing with corporate cutthroats.

For argument's sake, let's say you plan to work in the entertainment industry. Your goal is modest. You only want to become the boss of the whole operation, smoke Cuban cigars in your flamboyant corner office, order 24-hour Chinese takeout on your cell phone, and have a city bus with your name on it pick you up and take you anywhere you want! You figure it'll take six months. Our advice: Get a grip.

Ten years ago, I started delivering bags at D'Agostino supermarket and writing a column in my high school

ladies' lounge.

Young people nowadays need more than a good idea to get ahead. They need people to help get it done. And don't forget the sweat—that's the tang in the Tanqueray. But it all means nothing if your team lets you down.

Aren't you sick and tired of corporations that talk about how they want their employees to come up with ideas, but always let the best ones sit on the boardroom floor? On the down-low, most companies have enough money stashed to give a couple of loose cannons a shot at the top. Why haven't they picked us up, then? Because there are too many narrow-minded paperheads

Stix & Stönz
By Bönz Malone

Waiting to Excel

Though based in laid-back Los Angeles, Julie Dash has not been idle since writing, directing, and producing her acclaimed first feature, 1991's *Daughters of the Dust*. Being the first African-American female director to produce a full-length film for theatrical release, Dash generated mad expectations about her next projects. Biding her time and riding the slow wave of Hollywood deal making, Dash has nonetheless maintained a serious work ethic. This year she's completed a novel based on *Daughters of the Dust*, a video for Tracy Chapman ("Give Me One Reason") that helped revitalize the singer's career, a 30-minute erotic film for Showtime called *Grip Till It Hurts*, and a segment for an HBO special called *Subway Stories* produced by Rosie Perez and Jonathan Demme. As a black woman who has managed to balance artistic integrity and business sense, 44-year-old Dash is a model of self-empowerment.

Where your career is concerned, who has the power?

Who has the power and doesn't use it is what I'd like to talk about. Like many of the black stars and actors who have the power to get things done—just like Demi Moore used her power at HBO to coproduce a series on abortion. She got an independent director to write and direct segments. I think a lot of the black actors in New York and Hollywood could do that, but instead they look for vehicles for themselves. They ignore independent filmmakers for the most part. They'll take a lunch with you, but that's about it, because they want to align themselves with the A-list directors.

When you go out to lunch with these people, what's the conversation?

They say, "Love your movies; love to work with you." Then when you call and ask them to sign a letter of agreement to be in a certain film, they tell you, "I don't want to be an attachment, girl, unless you have a deal with a studio." They don't want to work with you unless you can get them the same money they get to be in big-money films. They would do well to look at the example of Nicolas Cage, who took a cut in his regular salary to do *Leaving Las Vegas* and won the Oscar. The only ones I've met with who didn't do that were Stacey Dash [*Clueless*], for whom I've written a project about a hacker called *Digital Diva*, and

Alfre Woodard, who said, "Whatever you got, I'm in it. Let's roll."

The project I want to do with Alfre is *Harris Neck*, about a black woman who ran an oyster farm in the South Carolina Sea Islands during World War II. It's in development hell. The financing keeps dropping out. People say, "Oh, we've seen that before," and I say, "You ain't

Just everyday issues like having a healthy zest for life. I always use a trapeze analogy. Like, have you ever seen a black woman who practiced on a trapeze on the weekends just because she wanted to fly? When I say that, some people ask, "Did someone beat her to get her on the trapeze?" We don't always do things in reaction to outside

trends for white males in order to make it. Well, that's not making it, that's mistaking it. That wouldn't make me feel powerful. That would make me feel like an idiot.

Do you feel the powers that be in Hollywood owe anything to black audiences?

Yeah, they owe a hell of a lot, but that doesn't mean anything in corporate America. This is business. The Hollywood industry could be producing wigs for machines; they don't care about their impact. Black investors need to invest in black films. There need to be serious venture capitalists who put together sums of money for films that are totally authentic to people of color. And if not, don't stand around at cocktail parties talking about negative images. Especially since we support these images. If something comes out celebrating black women's self-loathing and every black women's organization supports it, then what are we talking about?

Why do you think there's such a reluctance to finance film on the part of wealthy African-Americans?

Because they think someone else is going to do it—like the young M.B.A.'s who are going out to Hollywood. But those young M.B.A.'s only maintain the status quo because they have mortgages, and if they want to have a long career, they're not going to go in there and change anything. A development director for a famous black actor told me you could not make a film for less than \$5 million. When I said I made mine for \$800,000, he acted like that didn't count.

Well, at that price there's less money for them to steal.

Exactly, exactly. These development people are in law or business and don't know about film around the world. All they know about is getting to the top of their rung on the corporate ladder. And after going to one weekend writing seminar, they'll presume to tell you—who've been writing for 20 years—what your script needs. They like to use the seminar jargon, like, "When's your dramatic arc?" The next time one of them asks me where my dramatic arc is, I'm going to tell them it floated off with Noah.

Black-Owned

By
Greg Tate



Filmmaker Julie Dash reveals who has power in Hollywood—and who isn't using it.

seen this before"—a black woman diving for oysters and running the whole place. The films that are made about other cultures by the mainstream tend to be stories that demystify the experience for the dominant culture. A very well-known film that has black women palling around had everyone I know saying, "Yeah, yeah, I know that, but what else you got? This is boring." But it explains a lot to other people. Same thing with *The Joy Luck Club*, which lets us look in on another culture, but what did it do for Asian women who have issues?

What kind of issues do you want to explore in your work that, say, a Waiting to Exhale did not?

pressures. We have dreams and aspirations too.

Why do you think there is so much resistance to portraying black women as anything other than victims?

Even though there are women development people in Hollywood now, they still see the world through a male lens. They have to go back to the boardroom and pitch this thing, and they don't want to be seen as someone who's not pitching *Die Hard 4*. I've had women tell me that my work is too feminine, and I say, "Well, what did you expect? I'm dealing from the culture of women, and I'm not ashamed of that." One black woman executive told me to write action-adven-



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KOOL AND THE GANG
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LAKESIDE
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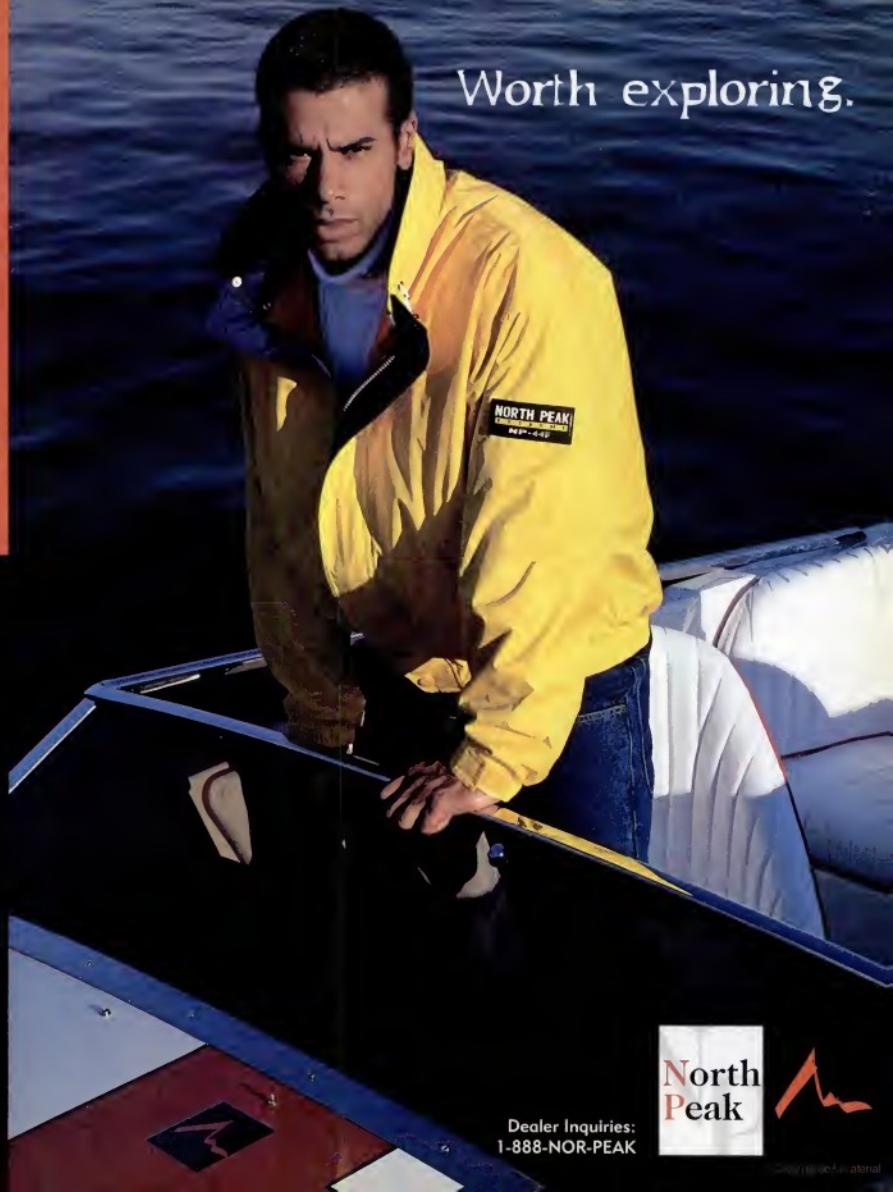
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GET crime pays

investors are making a killing from prison proliferation
by fredrick l. mckissack jr.

Let's face it: Crime is out of control. The breakdown of the family unit has caused criminals to take over our streets. So why not do what so many other Americans have done when faced with an ugly and troubling trend? Figure out a way to profit from it. Think of the rewards that can be had in the exciting and growing field of corrections!

Many investors are already reaping sizable returns from companies such as Corrections Corporation of America. The net income for this Nashville-based concern, which manages correctional facilities for governmental agencies, jumped 81 percent in 1995, its 12th year in business, to \$7.9 million. CCA—or CXC, as it's known on the New York Stock Exchange—is the largest, though by no means the only, operator of its kind, with 48 facilities under contract in 11 states, Puerto Rico, the U.K., and Australia. "We continue to pursue an ever-increasing number of business opportunities," the company's chief executive officer, Dr. R. Crants, has said.

Another way the private sector enters into the picture is by using incarcerated persons as a source of cheap labor. According to a recent article in the *Village Voice*, prisoners in state and federal institutions are paid a maximum of \$1.15 an hour—and are sometimes not paid at all—to perform a wide range of tasks. In New York, inmates answer phones for the Department of Motor Vehicles. In Washington State, convicts are packaging software for Microsoft. And in Alabama, a law was recently passed reinstating a time-honored method of repairing highways: chain gangs.

None of this is hurt by the fact that so-called three-strike laws are putting people behind bars all over the country—and keeping them there. A federal three-strikes statute has been on the books since 1994. The same year, the nation's most populous state, California, became the first to pass three-strikes legislation of its own. The result? The state's Office of the Legislative Analyst, a nonpartisan agency that analyzes the impact of state legislation, estimates that California's

prison population will nearly double by 2001. "The population increases are driven in part by the return of parole violators and persons receiving longer prison terms under the three-strikes law," says a recent agency report. "About 60

percent...of the offenders who so far have received third-strike 25-years-to-life sentences have been committed for nonviolent and nonserious offenses." And more prisoners—violent or otherwise—keep boosting the bottom line.

But labor is making money off criminal justice as well. As the number of prisoners in California increases, so does the number of guards. The California Correctional Peace Officers' Association had lobbied and spent heavily in support of the state's three-strikes law. (The union is also one of the state's five largest contributors to political candidates, donating nearly \$1 million to "tough on crime" governor Pete Wilson's 1990 reelection campaign.) The state has 181 prisons since 1980, with two more near completion. The prison population during that time increased from 23,511 to 134,406,

and the number of guards nearly quintupled, from 4,800 to 23,359. (Nationwide, the number of guards rose 40 percent between 1989 and 1994.) But most telling of all is the fact that the average salary for a California prison guard has risen from \$14,400 in 1980 to \$44,676 in 1995—\$10,000 a year more than the average salary of a public school teacher in the state.

Twenty other states have followed California's lead, passing three-strikes laws of their own. And using these laws against criminals seems to be a higher priority than preventing crime in the first place. The 1995 federal crime bill, for example, allotted only \$6.9 billion—23 percent—for prevention programs, whereas \$23.3 billion was made available to pay for prisons and law enforcement.

So who's getting locked up? After the first six months of California's three-strikes law, African-Americans constituted 57 percent of the third-strike cases in Los Angeles County, even though black folks make up only 12 percent of the county's population. Nationwide, one in three black males between the ages of 18 and 29 is involved in the criminal justice system, either as prisoner or parolee. Yet it is precisely these black males who benefit most from prevention programs—when they're available.

According to a National Criminal Justice Commission report, "Children born into poverty who attend a preschool program [like Head Start] have half as many criminal arrests, higher earnings, and a greater commitment to marriage than those who do not participate. Nevertheless, less than half of low-income children in the country are enrolled in such programs due to lack of funding." Surprised? Prevention programs merely benefit those at risk—not to mention the general public. Prisons, on the other hand, are big business.

While few would argue that crime isn't a severe—and worsening—problem in the U.S., it's also about the most controversial issue of our time. Here's what some VIBE readers had to say:

White hardened felons should be kept away from their potential victims, I have strong doubts that a three-strikes law could be applied fairly—affluent repeat offenders will be more likely to walk.

A person who has committed two felonies and then commits a third isn't trying too hard to stay clean. However, the crime committed should have to be severe—not, for example, possession of pot.

As shoddy and corrupt as our government can be, I still think it's the government's job to run the prisons. Privatization of prisons (like privatization of public schools and public hospitals) is nothing but a quick profit scheme and only encourages corruption.

I have no problem with prisons as a regulated private industry. We have private schools, private taxicab companies, and so forth. As long as they meet efficiency and safety standards, why shouldn't they be private?

I know several people who've been convicted of felonies, and I don't think they were treated fairly by the criminal justice system. They were placed in abusive correctional facilities at crucial periods in their lives and not rehabilitated at all.

I know someone who was convicted of a felony. I think he was treated fairly. He's doing his time now in Rikers. He committed the crime, now he has to do the time. In a way, they let him off easy.



BUCK THE SYSTEM: The Sentencing Project, 202-828-0571. American Civil Liberties Union/National Prison Project, 202-234-4830. The Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents, 818-397-1396. Families Against Mandatory Minimums, 202-457-5790. The Fortune Society, 212-206-7070. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 415-896-8223. National Criminal Justice Reference Services, 800-638-8736. Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), 202-789-2126. Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 202-467-0864. National Criminal Justice Commission, 703-684-0378. **THEN REGISTER AND VOTE!**

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rebel with a cause

district attorney Robert Johnson wants to rehabilitate the system

by cheo tyebimba

Try this experiment: Take a garden hose and turn the water on full blast. Next, step on the hose, blocking the flow completely. Now wait....

This is the new wave of crime legislation. Instead of attempting to turn the "water" off at its source, some lawmakers seek to treat problems caused by poverty, violence, poor housing, and crack with solutions like building more prisons and putting more people to death. Bronx district attorney Robert Johnson (the first African-American elected to that position in New York State's history) faces these sobering statistics daily. Despite being a strong advocate of rehabilitation and a tough prosecutor against crimes involving guns and violence, for some, Johnson hasn't been tough enough. And he's taken some of his critics to task. In response to his removal from a case where a police officer was shot and killed (in which Johnson refused to call for the death penalty), Johnson recently filed a suit in Bronx state supreme court challenging the governor's actions. Here's what he had to say to VIBE about crime and punishment.

Violence, homicide, and drug abuse are all symptoms of deeper ailments. What kind of economic or socially based solutions can offset some of the pressures that motivate many people to commit crimes?

The concept of mentoring and people being role models are necessary. I go to schools as frequently as I can. I spent yesterday morning with some fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders. And I don't make excuses for people who commit crimes, but a lot of it has to do with people not having hope or opportunity to do anything else. You also mentioned economics. If people were enticed into staying in school, it would put them in a better position economically down the road. Youth have to have hope, for education, for jobs.

What do you think about some of the sweeping changes that are being made by the new Congress, which is getting "tough on crime" with deterrents such as the three-strikes law in California?

From what I understand, three-strikes is not working the way it was intended to work. It's sweeping up people for minor crimes. In New York, we have

a three-felony rule. And I think that's appropriate. If you commit that number of felonies within a 10-year period here in New York, then you deserve to ante up in terms of what you're being sentenced to. We have quite a few tough statutes, and there are certain crimes that should have

harsher sentences. But trying to prosecute a person for life because they committed a misdemeanor? I don't think that's going to work.

What's your stand on the death penalty?

I've expressed a number of concerns about the death penalty. I think people react to it out of anger and frustration—it sounds good, it appeals to the gut. But I think they really don't have the full perspective of whether or not they're getting something for all the effort put in. The death penalty is not foolproof, and it runs the risk of executing innocent people.



REHAB MAN
"Prosecuting a person
for life for a misdemeanor
isn't going to work."

It has not been shown to be a deterrent in the states that use it. But studies show it's more costly than life without parole. And the trials are very complex. There are a number of appellate procedures involved. Given all this, I don't think people will really get what they expect when they seek it.

What has been the backlash over the case Governor Pataki removed you from in March—the prosecution of the man who shot and killed a police officer?

I made a professional decision. I gave the reasons for that decision but then never actually got to execute that decision. I just expressed my concerns about the death penalty in general and said that if it ever were to be used, these concerns had to be overcome. And I think people—even those who disagree with what I've said about the death penalty—believe the governor has exceeded his authority in trying to remove me from the case. The statute—the very statute

that he signed—gives the discretion to the district attorney. It's not a mandatory death-penalty statute. That's not permitted under our constitution.

So it's at your discretion?

Yes. The New York statute says that the juries won't consider death. They'll always have life without parole. They can only consider the death option if the district attorney files an attempt to seek it.

With so many cases of police corruption and brutality, do you believe changes need to be made in the judicial system?

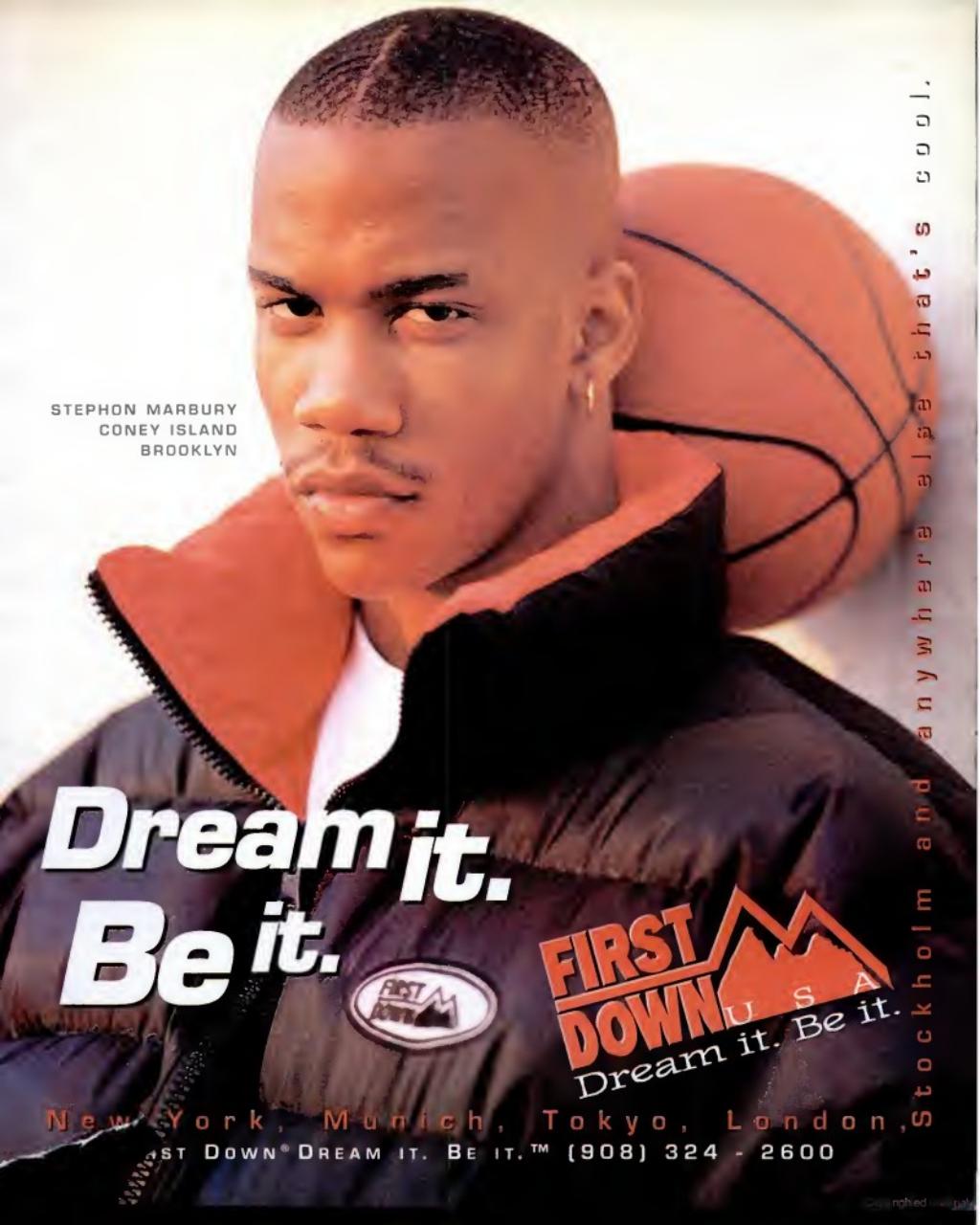
I think we just have to be vigilant. People have to continually report whatever abuses they observe or suffer. The police department has to commit itself, because it doesn't do the good officers any good to have the other officers soil the name of the entire department. The police departments have a real interest in weeding out the bad apples. And certainly, we as district attorneys are committed. We have prosecuted a number of police officers and have gotten some convictions.

What do you say to a drug dealer on the corner, or any kid who feels like he has nothing to lose?

I'd say that I've come from the projects. I've come from a public high school. And now I'm in a position where I can be a voice for them. I agree that people have to be incarcerated if they're an immediate threat to us. But I believe that we need to rehabilitate. So I've raised my voice on their behalf to try and have rehabilitation in the prisons, to try and have youth services for prevention. And I'll continue to do that. And I think they need to look at people who have survived having grown up in a similar environment and make the decision for themselves that they can do the same. I'm sure you can't even imagine Colin Powell sitting in a public school in the Bronx. But he did.

What advice do you have to youth who are making a difference and aren't in the judicial system?

One, I would tell them that they don't have to become Powell or they don't have to be a district attorney to be a role model. That if they have good values, if they're paying attention to what they're supposed to do, they're already making a difference to somebody else behind them. The eighth-grader can be an example to the fourth-grader. And that these young people are really doing it, sometimes against great odds, indicates to me that they are stronger and more capable than a lot of other people. They should be very optimistic about their future.



STEPHON MARBURY
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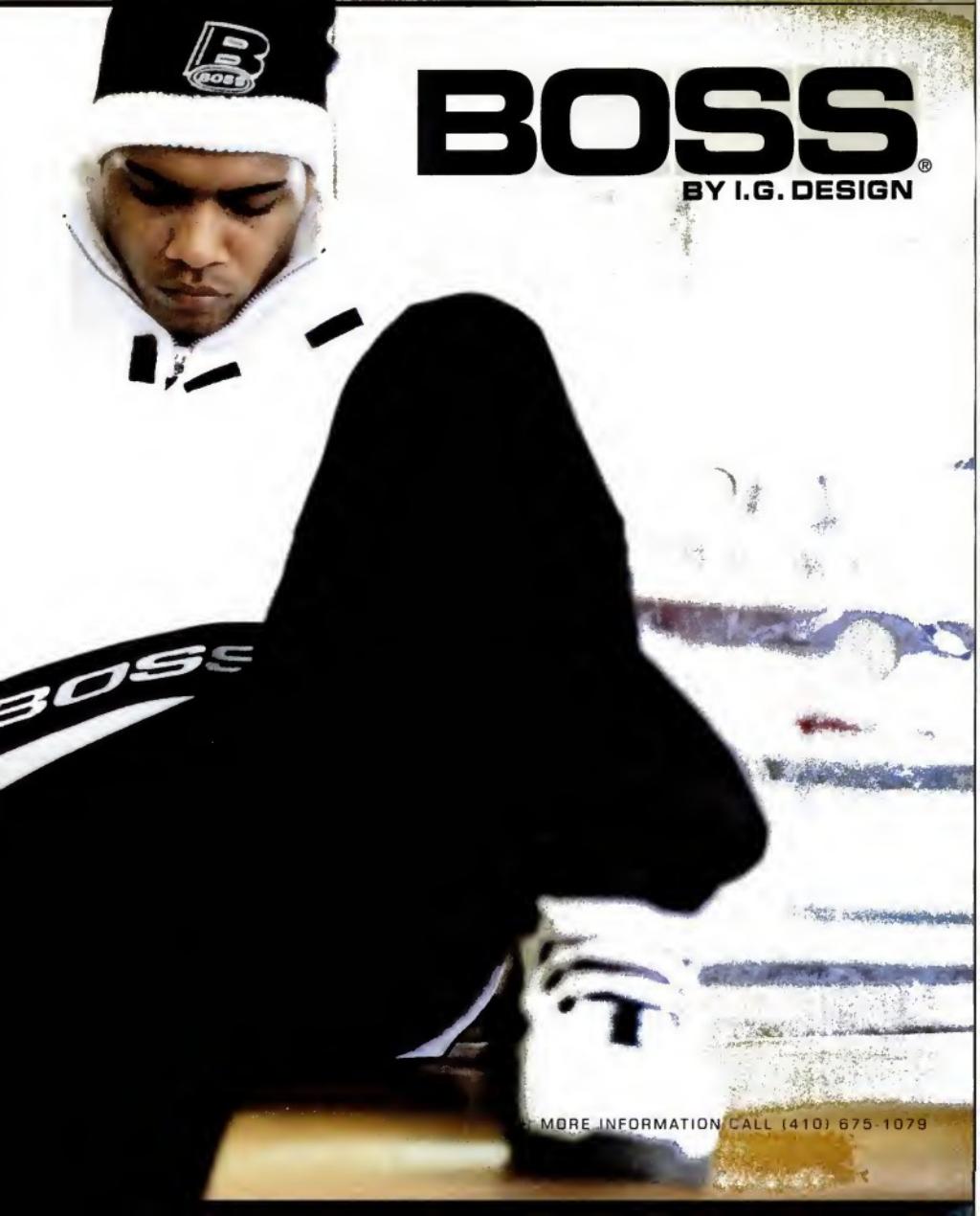
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NEXT

PEOPLE ON THE VERGE

QUAD CITY DJ'S Basic Instinct

IT'S TOUGH TO IGNORE YOUR DETRACTORS WHEN they're beamed directly into your home. Quad City DJ's Jay Ski (Johnny McGowan) points to the 61-inch color television in his huge living room and rolls his eyes. "I can't tell you how many times I've heard somebody call me ignorant," he says. "Every other comedy show is making fun of our stuff." The Florida bass guru assumes a pseudointellectual inflection and moves into an imitation of one performer who gets on his nerves: "We've got some real deep lyrics nowadays. One mo' agin, Boy, looka HEAH!" Translation: Can you believe this Florida field-Negro nonsense?

As one of the main cogs in Quad City DJ's (quad being a local term for "bass"), McGowan isn't . . . laughing. Not even smiling. After all, he and C.C. Lemonhead (with whom McGowan formed the production team in 1992) are the force behind '95 South's 1993 double-platinum "Whoof! (There It Is)" and the '99 Boyz' 1994 double-platinum "Tootsee Roll." Singer Jelanna "Lana" LaFleur joined Quad City for their own current hit "C'mon N' Ride It (The Train)." Unfortunately, Florida bass (the southeastern sound, Miami bass, booty rap, whatever) still has a bit of an image problem among hip hop's elitist intelligentsia. The hypercaffeinated tempos and torso-shaking low end are usually considered either charmingly backward—like your great-grandma's snuff habit—or pure Bama nonsense.

But to Southeast folks, it's been the sound—birthed from Miami's disco scene—since Luke threw that D in 1986. McGowan feels that despite his success on recent soundtracks for *Bad Boys*, *Sunset Park* ("Hoop N Yo Face"), Quad's hit collaboration with the '99 Boyz, and *Celtic Pride*, bass remains a largely unexplored genre. "The record industry was so up on West Coast rap for so long, they ignored what was going on down here," the 28-year-old Jacksonville native says. "I sold 6 million records, and people didn't even know it."

That was before his label, QuadraSound, signed a label deal with Big Beat/Atlantic Records this past spring. Add that industry oomph to the momentum gained by "C'mon," and Quad City's butt-centric autonomous debut, *Get On Up and Dance*, just might make the crossover breakthrough other bass artists haven't quite achieved. Little wonder McGowan takes bass-booty jokes personally. Stakes is high.

"We're the last form of music to get its shot," McGowan says. "What Russell Simmons is to East Coast hip hop, what Suge is to the West—that's what I want to be to bass."

Tony Green



Johnny "Jay" McGowan,
Jelanna "Lana"
LaFleur

IN CHICAGO'S SUBURBS, LIMOUSINE-RIDIN', WOULD-YOU-HAVE-ANY-GREY-POUPON? TYPES JOG ALONG WITH LOYAL CANINES, MAINTAINING PEACE OF mind. But on the West Side, there are potholes and hard times. In these badlands stands a family house called the Barn. It's second home to Crucial Conflict's Never, Kilo, Wildstyle, and Coldhard.

Protected by a pit bull, Rawhide, the Barn functions as an office and recording studio for Raw Dope Productions (owned by Shorty Kapone, Crucial's manager), and is equipped with weights, two pythons (Big Beast and Jake), and a boa constrictor (Overlord). "We have everything," says Coldhard. "We even play ball up in here—barnyard ball." On this April day, though, "Flict sit around eating corned beef, cabbage, and mashed potatoes 'n' gravy, plotting which parties to crash, whose ass to whup, and perfecting the "Rodeo" (Rhymes of Dirty English) style that fuels their maverick debut, *The Final Tic*.

"Eh, y'all," Kapone yells. "Hay Is No. 1 on the Box!" While the crew are happy about the success of their first single—a song devoted to the ghetto-getaway plant—they remain as cool as pimps pulling three-inch bill knots from their women. They reply, "Word?"

It's making music that gets "Flict hype. Chicago's underground served the foursome props at hole-in-the-wall clubs before they joined Fab 5 Freddy's Pallas Records. And it's not surprising Fab signed them; like Wu-Tang's Shao Lin, Tic's western theme doesn't come off gimmicky. When "hee-haw's echo through songs like "Desperado," allegorical high-noon show-

downs do the giddy-up (their signature bounce) through yer head.

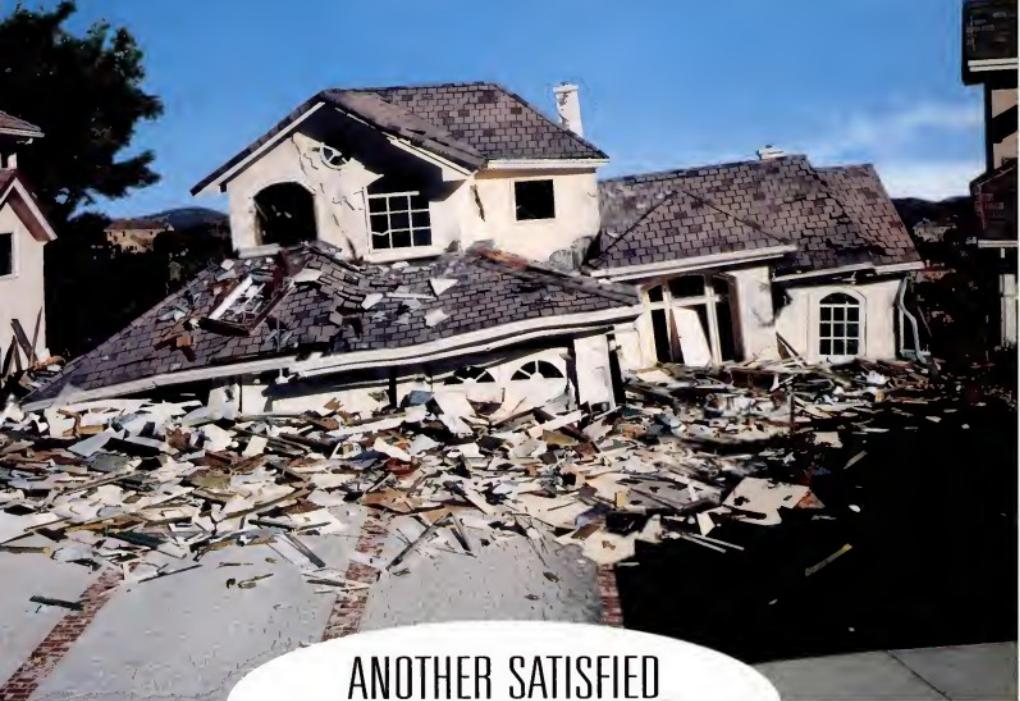
But after the do-si-do, these ghetto celebs still deal with stress. At press time, the boys in the Barn had just been raided by the Chicago police for suspicion of drug trafficking. "It wasn't the first time," Kilo says. "We just tryin' to do our dream," he recalls telling a policeman once. "They were, like, 'Fuck that.'" Though Crucial Conflict were forced to an undisclosed location after the incursion, it's still music business as usual. Who says that art—no matter how metaphorical—doesn't imitate life?

The Blackspoon

From left: Kilo, Wildstyle,
Never, Coldhard

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CRUCIAL CONFLICT
Once upon a time in the West



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NEXT

FIONA APPLE
Nothin' but a number

BENEATH THE COFFEE SPOTS BACK HIGH BALM trees on L.A.'s Monica Monica Hill, limned bodies walk slowly past cafe umbrellas and tattoo parlors. And singer-songwriter Fiona Apple, doe eyes tracing Pacific waves meeting sand, speaks. "You have to find words that have the right feel to them," the 16-year-old says, enunciating each syllable, "so that it feels wonderful to say them."

Falling out of her mouth and onto her bewitching debut, *Tidal* (Work/Clean Slate), Apple's words certainly do sound wonderful. She sings like heavy cream, aching and bluey, with subtlety and control that belie her years. Her voice can reach the breathy, ethereal highs of Kate Bush as on "Slow Like Honey," or sink as deep as Nina Simone's in the piano-driven, show-tune-y first single, "Shadowboxer."

Raised in Manhattan by her opera-singing family, Apple has been playing and composing piano music since age eight. Compared with the soprano pipes of her mother and sister, though, she never considered her alto a "singing" voice. Her oh-what-the-hell moment arrived at age 17 when she made

80 demo tapes, the first of which she gave to a friend who baby-sat for an associate of HK Management's

Andrew Slater, who's now Apple's manager/producer.

"It's funny," she says. "I'm only singing because I'm writing. I couldn't stand it if somebody else was singing my words."

Unsurprising, then, when Apple cites Maya Angelou as her muse. "When I was younger, my mom got me a book of her poetry. Every night I would read the poems over and over. These melodies would come through because of the rhythms and the relationships between her words. Her words have music in them!"

And while Apple's no Angelou, her stories are plenty heavy. With timelessly simple emotional honesty, the recent high school graduate croons her tales in the tones of a fortyish, two-time divorcee enrolled in a 12-step program..

"Basically, I'm saying I've had pain," Fiona says, brushing a twirl of blond hair from her face. "I'm sick of people not being able to talk about their feelings. Everybody has emotions. Everybody gets hurt." —David Bry

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"THE CROSS REPRESENTS MASSACRE," SAYS SUNZ OF MAN'S KILLAH PRIEST, POINTING UP AT THE GOLD CROSS MOUNTED ON THE 12-FOOT double doors of New York's St. Brigid Church. "People were put to death on crosses. People elevate that symbol like it represents Jesus, but that cross is no different from an electric chair."

On their fire-'n'-brimstone debut, *Ain't Nuttin' New Under the Sun* (Wu-Tang Records), Sunz of Man spit that kind of scripture-citing street knowledge with the fervor of preachers. But on this sunny spring day, they're not quite ready to join the 700 Club. "Religion's been used to keep our people separated for centuries," says Priest. "It's a form of genocide." He's sitting on the church steps with his fatigued-clad cipher-mates Prodigal Sun and Hell Razah. The absent 60 Second Assassin completes the Sunz' roster.

The Brooklyn-born crew hooked up with Wu-Tang Clan supra-producer RZA four years ago. Since then, they've been unfriendly Clansmen, guesting on such classic Wu-bangers as "Glaciers of Ice" and "B.I.B.L.E." These days, RZA's trademark dusty-crated beats and ghoulishly chant-filled tracks bolster the Sunz' own blood-soaked medieval imagery, which depicts a blighted world teetering on the edge.

"Right now," says Hell Razah, "the whole planet's about to get taken back." The church tower's late-afternoon shadow creeps toward a group of children playing on a jungle gym across the street. "I just wanna open my people's eyes."

As the millennium approacheth, the Sunz expect shit to get hectic. Expect more bodies arranged in a sunburst pattern. Expect more subway tunnels gassed. Expect more federal buildings bombed. And expect Sunz of Man to provide the soundtrack.

"We're the doomsday chill-dren," Priest says, watching the kids on the playground. "You know the kids that be singin' carols at Christmas? We're singin' about doomsday. You build a place on blood, what's gonna happen?" David Bry

NEXT

SUNZ OF MAN
Riders of the storm

From left: Prodigal Sun, Hell Razah,
Killah Priest, 60 Second Assassin

"If he's
so tight, why
doesn't he
have a record
year?"

Heard over a Heineken
Woodward Ave., Detroit

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NEXT

THE BRAXTONS
And then there were three

SOME FOLKS, EVEN IF THEY CARRIED A TUNE IN A BUCKET, WOULD SPILL IT. BUT spilling's allowed in karaoke bars, where even the most non-singing-est folks get to do Radio City.

But the Braxtons spill nothin'—they take any kind of singing seriously. On a cool March night in the back of New York's Notes nightclub, the trio hover over a karaoke song list. Tamar (Ms. Lips-and-Hips), 18, suggests Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean," and before anyone can argue, sashays to center stage (girlfriend simply doesn't walk any other way). Her sisters—prissy Towanda, 22, and Rapunzel-weaved Trina, 21—fall in place behind her, doing the Vandellas, circa 1963.

It's this kind of confidence that underscores So Many Ways (Atlantic), the Braxtons' debut. Tamar, Towanda, and Trina are less dramatic than their older, multiplatinum sister, Toni—but smoldering voices must run in the family. There's a deep ache in there too: Check the first single, "Where's the Good in Good-Bye." And when the Braxtons perform 1979's "The Boss" better than Diana Ross, the trio sound like they've been perfecting their harmonies for an eternity. And that's probably because they have been—ever since they belted out

their first song, "Somebody Get Me Some Toilet Paper," when a three-year-old Tamar was caught Charmin-less. Their mama (an evangelist) and daddy (a preacher) made sure they practiced. "Every time my father had to go [preach], he took all six children with him," Towanda says. "We were always the guest choir." Trina says, remembering the many Annapolis, Md. church dinners for which they provided entertainment.

But the Braxtons' first 12-inch single, 1989's "The Good Life" (Arista), was a bit of a bust. "It went zinc," Towanda says flatly of the cut, which also featured Toni and second-oldest sister Traci. After losing Toni amicably to LaFace Records the next year, the group went on hiatus, but then joined their sister as backup performers—to rave reviews—on her 1993 world tour. In 1995, Traci left to be a youth counselor.

And then there were three. The Braxton sisters are just your average Moschino-wearing, Fugees-listening, Audrey-Hepburn-black-and-white-movie-watching sisters. And they can rock your average karaoke spot—without spillin' a thing.

Joyce E. Davis

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NEXT

MASTER P Wanna lick?

"THAT'S IGNORANT," SAYS RAPPER/PRODUCER/ENTREPRENEUR Master P. He's explaining the difference between selling a million records and actually getting paid for it. "How would I look settling for 15 percent of a gold record? I'm trying to get the whole pie, rather than just a percentage."

With the release of his latest, *Ice Cream Man*, P has been having his pie à la mode. His first album, 1993's *The Ghetto Is Trying to Kill Me*, became an underground hit (and gained backhanded notoriety when a California teen testified in his armed-robery trial that he had received inspiration from the album's "211"). His next release, 1995's "99 Ways to Die," moved 100,000 copies in seven weeks. *Ice Cream Man*, which landed P a distribution deal with Priority, features more of his graphic urban narratives and debuted at No. 3 on the *Billboard* R&B album chart, moving nearly 500,000 units in just six months—"with no radio or video," P boasts.

Considering the increasingly hostile climate toward P's style of "reality rap," he made sure that when it was time for business, he was bargaining from a position of strength. In 1987, at age 17, P—who grew up in New Orleans'

Calliope Projects and also lived briefly

with his father in Richmond, Calif.—

began his own record label, No Limit.

With its not-too-tart, not-too-sweet funk production riding under P's unrelenting gangsta fables, *Ice Cream Man* clearly isn't about courting the genteel. But there's always a message, he says, in tunes such as "Ghetto Heroes" and "No More Tears": Pull yourself up—by your toenails if you haven't got any bootstraps.

"I'll tell you like this here," he says in his Sun Belt drawl. "I grew up in some of the worst ghettos, so I don't down any man for doing what he has to do survive. This rap game is like the new dope game. That's what ice cream means—whatever turns a profit. And with this here, you don't have to go to work with a gun or a knife, just some straight-up lyrics and a mike." Clearly pleased with himself, Master P smirks. "I call it space-age hustling." —Tony Green



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Suge Knight,
CEO, Death
Row Records

The power to
forgive.
Lionel Richie,
comeback
king



STAKES IS

PUFFY AND BIGGIE BREAK THEIR SILENCE ON TUPAC, DEATH ROW, AND ALL THE EAST-WEST FRICITION. A TALE OF BAD BOYS AND BAD MEN. BY THE BLACKSPOT

Now, we can settle this like we got some class, or we can get into some gangster shit.

—Max Julien as Goldie in *The Mack*

It's hard to believe that someone who has seen so much could have such young eyes. But the eyes of Sean "Puffy" Combs, bright, brown, and alert, reflect the stubborn innocence of childhood. His voice, however, tells another story. Sitting inside the control room of Daddy's House Studios in Midtown Manhattan, dressed in an Orlando Magic jersey and linen slacks, Puffy speaks in low, measured tones, almost whispering.

"I'm hurt a little bit spiritually by all the negativity, by this whole Death Row-Bad Boy shit," says Puffy, president of Bad Boy Entertainment, one of the most powerful creative forces in black music today. And these days, one of the most tormented. "I'm hurt that out of all my accomplishments, it's like I'm always getting my most fame from negative drama. It's not like the young man that was in the industry for six years, won the ASCAP Songwriter of the Year, and every record he put out went at least gold... All that gets overshadowed. How it got to this point, I really don't know. I'm still trying to figure it out."

So is everyone else. What's clear is that a series of incidents—Tupac Shakur catching bullets at a New York studio in November '94, a close friend of Death Row CEO Suge Knight being killed at an Atlanta party in September '95, the Notorious B.I.G. and Tupac facing off after the Soul Train Music Awards in L.A. this past March—have led to much finger-pointing and confusion. People with little or no connection to Death Row or Bad Boy are choosing up sides. From the Atlantic to the Pacific, hip hop heads are proclaiming their "California Love" or claiming that the "East is in the house" with the loyalty of newly initiated gang members. As Dr. Dre put it, "Pretty soon, niggaz from the East Coast ain't gonna be able to come out here and be safe. And vice versa."

Meanwhile, the two camps that have the power to put an end to it all have yet to work out their differences. Moreover, Suge Knight's Death Row camp, while publicly claiming there is no beef, has continued to aggravate the situation: first, by making snide public comments about the Bad Boy family, and second, by releasing product that makes the old Dre-vs.-Easy conflict look tame. The intro to the video for the Tupac/Snoop Doggy Dogg song "2 of Ameri'caz Most Wanted" features two characters named Pig and Buff who are accused of setting up Tupac and are then confronted in their office. And the now infamous B-side, "Hit 'Em Up," finds Tupac, in a fit of rage, telling Biggie, "I fucked your bitch, you fat motherfucker," and then threatening to wipe out all of Bad Boy's staff and affiliates.

While the records fly off the shelves and the streets get hotter, Puffy and Big have remained largely silent. Both say they've been reluctant to discuss the drama because the media and the public have blown it out of proportion. At press time, there were rumors festering that Puffy—who was briefly hospitalized June 30 for a cut arm—had tried to commit suicide, causing many to wonder if the pressure had become too much. Determined to put an end to all the gossip, Puffy and Big have decided to tell their side.

Why would I set a nigga up to get shot?" says Puffy.

"If I'ma set a nigga up, which I would never do, I ain't gonna be in the country. I'ma be in Bolivia somewhere." Once again, Puffy is answering accusations that he had something to do with Shakur's shooting at New York's Quad Recording Studio, the event that sowed the seeds of Tupac's beef with the East.

In April 1995, Tupac told VIBE that moments after he was ambushed and shot in the building's lobby, he took the elevator up to the studio, where he saw about 40 people, including Biggie and Puffy. "Nobody approached me. I noticed that nobody would look at me," said Tupac, suggesting that the people in the room knew he was going to be shot. In "Hit 'Em Up," Tupac does more than suggest, rapping, "Who shot me? But ya punks didn't finish / Now you're about to feel the wrath of a menace."

But Puffy says Tupac's barking up the wrong tree: "He ain't mad at the niggas that shot him; he knows where they're at. He knows who shot him. If you ask him, he knows, and everybody in the street knows, and he's not stepping to them, because he knows that he's not gonna get away with that shit. To me, that's some real sucker shit. Be mad at everybody, man; don't be using niggas as scapegoats. We know that he's a nice guy from New York. All shit aside, Tupac is a nice, good-hearted guy."

Taking a break from recording a new joint for his upcoming album, *Life After Death*, Big sinks into the studio's sofa in a blue Sergio Tacchini running suit that swishes with his every movement. He is visibly bothered by the lingering accusations. "I'm still thinking this nigga's my man," says Big, who first met Tupac in 1993 during the shooting of John Singleton's *Poetic Justice*. "This shit's just got to be talk, that's all I kept saying to myself. I can't believe he would think that I would shit on him like that."

He recalls that on the movie set, Tupac kept playing Big's first single, "Party and Bullshit." Flattered, he met Tupac at his home in L.A., where the two hung out, puffed lah, and chilled. "I always thought it to be like a Gemini thing," he says. "We just clicked off the top and were cool ever since." Despite all the talk, Big claims he remained loyal to his partner in rhyme through thick and thin. "Honestly, I didn't have no prob-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANA LIXENBERG



UNDER FIRE

"That's my problem,"
says Puffy. "I'm always trying to
see if I can help somebody."



TO BEEF OR NOT TO BEEF?
"I ain't a gangster," says Puffy,
"so why y'all gonna tell me to
start acting like a gangster?"

lem with the nigga," Big says. "There's shit that muthafucks don't know. I saw the situations and how shit was going, and I tried to school the nigga. I was there when he bought his first Rolex, but I wasn't in the position to be rolling like that. I think Tupac felt more comfortable with the dudes he was hanging with because they had just as much money as him."

"He can't front on me," says Big. "As much as he may come off as some Biggie hater, he knows. He knows when all that shit was going down, I was schoolin a nigga to certain things, me and [Live Squad rapper] Stretch—God bless the grave. But he chose to do the things he wanted to do. There wasn't nothing I could do, but it wasn't like he wasn't my man."

While Tupac was taking shots at Biggie—claiming he'd bit his "player" style and sound—Suge was cooking up his own beef with Bad Boy. At the *Source* Awards in August 1995, Suge made the now legendary announcement, "If you don't want the owner of your label on your album or in your video or on your tour, come sign with Death Row." Obviously directed at Puffy's high-profile role in his artists' careers, the remark came as a shock. "I couldn't believe what he said," Puffy recalls. "I thought we was boys." All the same, when it came time for Puffy to present an award, he said a few words about East-West unity and made a point of hugging the recipient, Death Row artist Snoop Doggy Dogg.

Nonetheless, Suge's words spread like flu germs, reigniting ancient East-West hostilities. It was in this increasingly tense atmosphere that Big and the Junior M.A.F.I.A. clique reached Atlanta for Jermaine Dupri's birthday party last September. During the after-party at a club called Platinum House, Suge Knight's close friend Jake Robles was shot. He died at the hospital a week later. Published reports said that some witnesses claimed a member of Puffy's entourage was responsible.

At the mention of the incident, Puffy sucks his teeth in frustration. "Here's what happened," he says. "I went to Atlanta with my son. At that time, there wasn't really no drama. I didn't even have bodyguards, so that's a lie that I did. I left the club, and I'm waiting for my limo, talking to girls. I don't see [Suge] go into the club; we don't make any contact or nothing like that. He gets into a beef in the club with some niggas. I knew the majority of the club, but I don't know who he got into the beef with, what it was over, or nothing like that. All I heard is that he took beef at the bar. I see people coming out. I see a lot of people that I know. I see him, and I see everybody yelling and screaming and shit. I get out the limo and I go to him, like, 'What's up, you all right?' I'm trying to see if I can help. That's my muthafuckin' problem," Puffy says, pounding his fist into his palm in frustration. "I'm always trying to see if I can help somebody."

"Anyway, I get out facing him, and I'm, like, 'What's going on, what's the problem?' Then I hear shots ringing out, and we turn around and someone's standing right behind me. His man—God bless the dead—gets shot, and he's on the floor. My back was turned; I could've got shot, and he could've got shot. But right then he was, like, 'I think you had something to do with this.' I'm, like, 'What are you talking about? I was standing right here with you!' I really felt sorry for him, in the sense that if he felt that way, he was showing my insecurity."

After the Atlanta shooting, people on both coasts began speculating. Would there be retribution? All-out war? According to a *New York Times Magazine* cover story, Puffy sent Louis Farrakhan's son, Mustafa, to talk with Suge. Puffy says he did not send Mustafa but did tell him, "If there's anything you can do to put an end to this bullshit, I'm with it." The *Times* reported that Suge refused to meet with Mustafa. Suge has since declined to speak about his friend's murder.

Less than two weeks later, when it came time for the "How Can I Be Down?" rap conference in Miami, the heat was on. Suge, who has never concealed his past affiliations with L.A.'s notorious Bloods, was rumored to be coming with an army. Puffy was said to be bringing a massive of New York drug lords and thugs. When the conference came and Puffy did not attend, *Billboard* reported that it was due to threats from Death Row.

On December 16, 1995, it became apparent that the trouble was spilling into the streets. In Red Hook, Brooklyn, shots were fired at the trailer where Death Row artists Tha Dogg Pound were making a video for "New York, New York"—which features Godzilla-size West Coasters stomping on the Big Apple. No one was hurt, but the message was clear. Then came "L.A., L.A.," an answer record from New York MCs Tragedy, Capone, Noreaga, and Mobb Deep. That video featured stand-ins for Tha Dogg Pound's Daz and Kurupt being kidnapped, tortured, and tossed off the 59th Street Bridge.

By this time, the rumor mill had kicked into overdrive. The latest story was that Tupac was boning Biggie's wife, Faith Evans, and Suge was getting with Puffy's sex, Misa Hylton. Death Row allegedly printed up a magazine ad featuring Misa and Suge holding Puffy's two-year-old son, with a caption reading "The East Coast can't even take care of their own." The ad—which was discussed on New York's Hot 97 by resident gossip Wendy Williams—never ran anywhere, but reps were tarnished nonetheless. Death Row now denies that such an ad ever existed. Puffy says he didn't know about any ad. Misa says, "I don't do interviews."

Meanwhile, Tupac kept rumors about himself and Faith alive with vague comments in interviews like "You know I don't kiss and tell." But in "Hit 'Em Up," released this May, he does just that, telling Biggie, "You claim to be a player, but I fucked your wife." (Faith, for her part, denies ever sleeping with Tupac.)

When talk turns to his estranged wife, Biggie shrugs his shoulders and pulls on a blunt. "If the muthafucka really did fuck Fay, that's foul how he just blowin' her like that," he says. "Never once did he say that Fay did some foul shit to him. If honey was to give you the pussy, why would you disrespect her like that? If you had beef with me, and you're, like, 'Boom, I'ma fuck his wife,' would you be so harsh on her? Like you got beef with her? That shit doesn't make sense. That's why I don't believe it."

What was still mostly talk and propaganda took a turn for the ugly at the *Soul Train* Awards this past March. When Biggie accepted his award and bigged-up Brooklyn, the crowd hissed. But the real drama came after the show, when Tupac and Biggie came face-to-face for the first time since Pac's shooting more than two years before. "That was the first time I really looked into his face," says Big. "I looked into his eyes and I was, like, Yo, this nigga is really buggin' the fuck out."

The following week's *Hollywood Reporter* quoted an unnamed source saying that Shakur waved a pistol at Biggie. "Nah, Pac didn't pull steel on me," says Big. "He was on some tough shit, though. I can't knock them dudes for the way they go about their biz. They made everything seem so dramatic. I felt the darkness when I rolled up that night. Duke came out the window fatigued out, screaming 'West Side! Outlaws!' I was, like, 'That's Bishop [Tupac's character in the movie *Juice*]!' Whatever he's doing right now, that's the role he's playing. He played that shit to a tee. He had his little goons with him, and Suge was with him, and they was, like, 'We gonna settle this now!'"

That's when Big's ace, Little Caesar of Junior M.A.F.I.A., stepped up. "The nigga Ceez—pissy drunk—is up in the joint, like, 'Fuck you!'" Big recalls. "Ceez is, like, 'Fuck you, nigga! East Coast, muthafucka!' Pac is, like, 'We on the West Side now, we gonna handle this shit.' Then his niggas start formulating and my niggas start formulating—somebody pulled a gun, muthafuckas start screaming, 'He got a gun, he got a gun!' We're, like, 'We're in L.A. What the fuck are we supposed to do, shoot out?' That's when I knew it was on."

But not long after the *Soul Train* incident, it appeared as if Death Row might be starting to chill. At a mid-May East-West "rap summit" in Philadelphia, set up by Dr. Ben Chavis to help defuse the situation, Suge avoided any negative comments about Puffy (who did not attend because he says there was too much hype around the event). "There's nothing between Death Row and Bad Boy, or me and Puffy," said Knight. "Death Row sells volume—so how could Puffy be a threat to me, or Bad Boy be a threat to Death

DEATH ROW VS. BAD BOY HERE'S THE BEEF:

November 30, 1994:
Tupac Shakur ambushed and shot at Quad Recording Studio in Manhattan.

February 14, 1995:
Shakur sentenced up to four and a half years for sexual abuse.

April 1995:
In a VIBE interview, Shakur implicates Biggie, Puffy, Andre Harrell, and others in his ambush.

August 1995:
Biggie, Puffy, and Harrell tell VIBE that they had no connection to Tupac's shooting.

August 3, 1995:
Suge Knight dishes Puffy at the Source Awards.

September 24, 1995:
While in Atlanta for Jermaine Dupri's birthday party, Knight's friend Jake Hobles is shot. Suge blames Puffy and his entourage.

October 1995:
Tupac signs with Death Row after Knight posts \$1.4 mil-

lion bond for his release.

October 21,

1995:

Billboard attributes Combs's absence from the "How Can I Be Down?" conference in Miami to threats from Knight.

February 1996:

Shakur suggests he's been sleeping with Biggie's wife, Faith. Knight is rumored to be seeing Puffy's ex, Misa Hylton. Both women deny the stories.

March 29, 1996: Words are exchanged and a gun is pulled when Death Row and Bad Boy employees face off after the *Soul Train* Awards in Los Angeles.

May 1996: In the video for Tupac and Snoop Doggy Dogg's "2 of Ameriqa Most Wanted," caricatures of Biggie and Puffy are punished for setting up Tupac.

June 4, 1996: Death Row releases Tupac's "Hit 'Em Up," a brutal diatribe against Biggie, Bad Boy, Mobb Deep, and others. Joseph V. Tirella

Row?" A few weeks later, however, Death Row released a song that told a different tale.

When Tupac's "Hit 'Em Up"—which mimics the chorus of Junior M.A.F.I.A.'s "Player's Anthem" ("Grab your Glocks when you see Tupac")—hit the streets of New York, damn near every jeep, coupe, and walkman was pumping it. No fucking jacks here, son; Tupac set it on the East something lovely. He says he put out the song in retaliation for Big's 1995 "Who Shot Ya," which he took as a comment on his own shooting. "Even if that song ain't about me," he told VIBE, "You should be like, 'I'm not putting it out, 'cause he might think it's about him.'"

"I wrote that muhfuckin' song way before Tupac got shot," says Big, like he's said it before. "It was supposed to be the intro to that shit Keith Murray was doing on Mary J. Blige's joint. But Puff said it was too hard."

As if the lyrical haymakers thrown at Bad Boy weren't enough, Pac went the extra mile and pulled Mobb Deep into the mix. "Don't one of you niggas got sickie-cell or something?" he says on the record. "You gonna fuck around and have a seizure or a heart attack. You'd better back the fuck up before you get smacked the fuck up."

Prodigy of Mobb Deep says he couldn't believe what he heard. "I was, like, Oh shit. Them niggas is shittin' on me. He's talking about my healthy. Yo, he doesn't even know me, to be talking about shit like that. I never had any beef with Tupac. I never said his name. So that shit just hurt. I'm, like, Yeah, all right, whatever. I just gotta handle that shit." Asked what he means by "handling" it, Prodigy replies, "I don't know, son. We gonna see that nigga somewhere and—whatever. I don't know what it's gonna be." In the meantime, the infamous ones plan to include an answer to "Hit 'Em Up" on the B-side of an upcoming single.

In a recent interview with VIBE online, Tupac summed up his feelings toward Bad Boy in typically dramatic fashion: "Fear goes stronger than love, and niggas did things they weren't supposed to do. They know in their hearts—that's why they're in hell now. They can't sleep. That's why they're telling all the reporters and all the people, 'Why they doing this? They fucking up hip hop' and blah-blah-blah, 'cause they in hell. They can't make money, they can't go anywhere. They can't look at themselves,' cause they know the prodigal son has returned."

In the face of all this, one might wonder why Biggie hasn't retaliated physically to Tupac's threats. After all, he's the same Bed-Stuy soldier who rapped, "C4 to your door, no beef no more." Says Big, "The whole reason I was being cool from Day One was because of that nigga Puff. 'Cause Puff don't get down like that."

So what about a response on record? "He got the streets riled up because he got a little song dissing me," Big replies, "but how would I look dissing him back? My niggas is, like, 'Fuck dat nigga, that nigga's much on your dick, it don't even make no sense to say anything.'

Given Death Row's intimidating reputation, does Puffy believe that he's in physical danger? "I never knew of my life being in danger," he says calmly. "I'm not saying that I'm ignorant to the rumors. But if you got a problem and somebody wants to get your ass, they

don't talk about it. What it's been right now is a lot of moviemaking and a lot of entertainment drama. Bad boys move in silence. If somebody wants to get your ass, you're gonna wake up in heaven. There ain't no record gonna be made about it. It ain't gonna be no interviews; it's gonna be straight-up 'Oh shit, where am I? What are these wings on my back? Your name is Jesus Christ.' When you're involved in some real shit, it's gonna be some real shit."

"But ain't no man gonna make me act a way that I don't want to act. Or make me be something I'm not. I ain't a gangster, so why y'all gonna tell me to start acting like a gangster? I'm trying to be an intelligent black man. I don't give a fuck if niggas think that's corny or not. If anybody comes and touches me, I'm going to defend myself. But I'ma be me—a young nigga who came up making music, trying to put niggas on, handle his business, and make some history."

The history of hip hop is built on battles. But it used to be that when heads had a problem, they could pull a mike and settle it, using hollow-point rhymes to rub their competitors off the map. Well, things done changed. The era of the gun clapper is upon us, with rappers and record execs alike taking their cue from Scarface.

FAMILY AFFAIRS Little Caesar, Biggie, Puffy



Meanwhile, those on the sidelines seem less concerned with the truth than with fanning the flames—gossiping about death threats and retribution, lying in wait for the first sign of bloodshed.

When the bloodshed came, it wasn't quite what people expected. On June 30, Puffy was rushed to the emergency room of St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital in Upper Manhattan, where he was treated for a deep cut to his lower right arm. New York's *Daily News* called it a "slit wrist," implying that it was more than an accident. Puffy calls the story nonsense. "I was playing with my girl and I reached for a champagne glass and it broke on my bracelet, cutting my arm," he says. "I ain't tryin' to kill myself. I got problems but it ain't that bad."

More than anything, Puffy seems exhausted by the whole ordeal. But after all he's seen in the past two years, nothing can surprise him—except, maybe, the squashing of this beef. "I'm ready for it to come to a head, however it gotta go down," he says. "I'm ready for it to be out my life and be over with. I mean that from the bottom of my heart. I just hope it can end quick and in a positive way, because it's gotten out of hand." □



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SOUL SURVIVALIST

"R&B songwriting isn't as artistic as it used to be. The integrity of it is gone. The respect for it is gone."

Can you imagine what would happen if a '90s B-boy broke fool in a time machine, landed on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and smoothly filled in for Otis Redding (who was laid up at the crib with a stomach virus, unable to perform)? Can you imagine the sort of melodies that would emanate from a hip hop head who'd been soaked in a sound vault full of Earth, Wind & Fire's multiple harmonies? Soaked to capacity with the juice of strong little jazz struts, hip hop instrumentals, Marvin Gaye's godlike croonings, and Prince's epic, climactic wails? Can you? No? Then snap your fingers six times, close your eyes, and say "Yes, yes, y'all."

Squeeze them shut real tight, and you'll probably see D'Angelo.

He may have the reputation of a mack, but D'Angelo, 22, is most definitely *not* postin' it like Billy Dee when the door of his New Jersey bungalow swings open. He looks like he'd rather be someplace else. "I'm 'bout to move back to Virginia," he says, squinting and removing a pair of extra-thick, black-rimmed science-teacher spectacles. "I need some peace. I can't write up here around all these people."

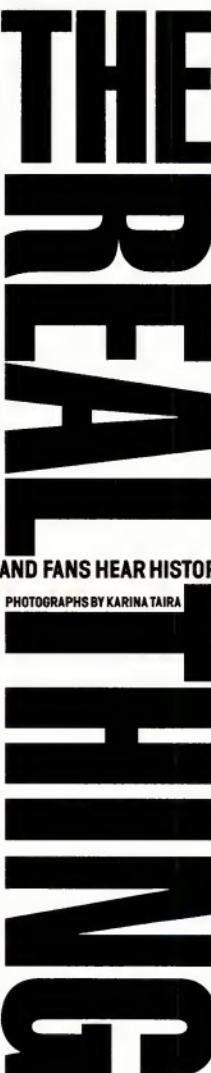
Easing back into his comfy little place, he says that Richmond, his southern-cooked hometown, can be held accountable for much of his artistic prowess. "It's more of a spiritual thing down there," says D'Angelo.

D'ANGELO LISTENS BACK—AND FANS HEAR HISTORY IN THE MAKING. BY SACHA JENKINS

"It's about reaching back to the things that mean everything to me. Like family."

His family is truly a God-fearing one. D'Angelo's father and grandfather are both preachers, and at age four, Michael D'Angelo Archer was already playing the piano for those who prayed at his pappy's church. Years later, at his grandfather's house of worship, D'Angelo had a great insight. "It was a real holy, Pentecostal church," he says. "Everybody shoutin', speaking in tongues. My grandfather would open up the Bible at the beginning of the sermon, read one line, then close the Bible up. The whole rest of the time, he's just talking—but in a singing voice. I learned that the music part of the service was just as important as the actual preaching. Someone might not be ready to hear preaching, but a song will touch him. Music is a ministry in itself."

At least a million people are responding to this singer-songwriter/producer's ministry. D'Angelo's debut, *Brown Sugar*, has gone platinum. He was nominated for a 1995 Grammy (Best Male R&B Performance), and he cleaned out the Soul Train Music Awards, stepping away with trophies for Best New Artist, Best R&B Single, and Best R&B Album—Male. "He's talented, creative, unique—such as myself," says the modest rapper AZ,



who appears on DJ Premier's vibrant remix of D'Angelo's "Lady." "D's music touches certain organs in your body," AZ says conspiratorially. "He's in a different zone."

A Tribe Called Quest's Ali-Shaheed Muhammad coproduced "Brown Sugar." "The first time I heard of a D'Angelo," he says, on the phone from his home in New Jersey, "I was sitting in my car with Raphael Saadiq [of Tony Toni Toné]. He said to me, 'There was Marvin, there's Michael, there's Stevie, there's Prince—and there's D'Angelo.' Then Raphael played me a couple of D's songs. My impression was the same as Raphael's—I was listening to history in the making."

In stark contrast to the many prosaic hybrids that already exist, D'Angelo's creations meld the sensibilities of avant-garde hip hop and R&B (as opposed to just the actual music). D'Angelo pretty much kicked in the door for singer-songwriters like Tony Rich and Maxwell to set up shop on the R&B and pop charts: He made America ready for young black men playing instruments again.

The urban stylings and posturings of hip hop are the strongest traits of influence leading to D'Angelo's world of tonal landscapes—aside from Prince. "Prince's stuff is a collage of many people who came before him," D'Angelo says. We're in his living room, and a framed image of Richard Roundtree as Shaft is staring us down. "He latches onto the music he loves—then does his own thing with it."

But there's also the boom-bap. "Hip hop made me go back and listen to old music. Hip hop made a lot of people go back and listen to old music." Asked about his own specific blend of influences, however, he gives a puzzled look. "I don't fully know what my package is," he says. "I know it's me. I know it's black."

And while D'Angelo's songwriting mirrors that of a true music scholar, beyond his on-the-job experience in the houses

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KARINA TAIRA

es of the holy, his musical training was actually quite random. "I learned music with this nun," he says. "She taught me how to read music, fingering exercises, scales. I learned some songs by Bach, and then I quit." He was 12 at the time. "I had a strong ear and would remember what she played, instead of reading. Eventually she caught on."

But he kept on playing in church, and started a cool little R&B band with his cousins. D'Angelo was writing songs too—using his middle name. "That's also where Michael Archer started going by his middle name. It happened when he was 15 or 16," says Rodney Archer, D'Angelo's older brother. "It's a renaissance, you know? Like Michaelangelo. It's a reference to the musical renaissance that he's bringing."

D'Angelo got his break at Harlem's Apollo Theatre. The victor of local talent shows, he found himself, one Wednesday evening, competing with other hopefuls in an (untelevised) amateur night—the legendary quest for soul celebrity. "I was 16," he says, "and won first place at the Apollo. I'll never forget that shit. All of my family came with me on the bus, and that night, going back home, everybody was sleeping. I was smoking cigarettes out the window, in a daze, tryin' to remember all that had happened."

Back in Richmond, he was working with a rap group called L.D.U. Two of the guys traveled north and played their tracks for a New York publishing company, Midnight Songs. "The president of Midnight, Jocelyn Cooper-Gilstrap, sent the MCs back to Virginia to get D," says Kedar Massenburg, D'Angelo's former manager. "She heard his music playing under their lyrics and wanted him. She signed D and helped set up his recording deal with EMI." →

Me resisting the temptation of drugs.

Sony Rollins, saxophone colossus

Jessye Norman singing "Motherless Child." It made me realize that in its purest element, opera is soul at a classical pitch.

Veronica Chambers, author



Electricity. Whether it's the transformer blowing out and seeing all of Kingston covered in darkness or the connection between me and the crowd while I'm performing on stage. That's the magic. That's electricity.

Buju Banton, reggae prophet



D'Angelo produced the hit song "U Will Know" (Mercury), featuring male stars from Brian McKnight to Aaron Hall to Lenny Kravitz, for the 1995 soundtrack to *Jason's Lyric*. "There was a series of demos D'Angelo had," says Cooper-Gilstrap, now a senior vice president at MCA. "U Will Know" was one of them. D'Angelo wasn't even feeling the song, because he'd written it when he was so young."

He is still young. But while many R&B singers are content to croon over classic riffs, D'Angelo—his cover of Smokey Robinson's 1976 "Cruisin'" notwithstanding—writes living compositions in the technical, precision-oriented spirit of Curtis Mayfield. Soulful guitars give way to whimsical, deep bass sounds and crisp drum splatters—and it all gets dressed with D'Angelo's fading, crying, beautifully pitched vocal transmissions.

But before the transmissions, there were transgressions. "[Me and my crew] was slipping on the music side, and not giving a fuck." D'Angelo's mellow words glide like a canoe. "Around Christmas three or four years ago, every day, something ill happened. Finally, we all got locked up." But D'Angelo wasn't interested in prison life. There would be no Shawshank redemption for him. "That's when I had to make a decision for myself," he says. D'Angelo got out of jail and got down to music.

And business. He's already working with a group, Dirty Souls, featuring two of his cousins. "I want to develop acts," he says. "R&B songwriting is nowhere near as strong and artistic as it used to be. The integrity of it is gone. The respect for it is gone."

Pop star or no, D'Angelo is the quintessential esoteric type. And manly, B-boy static electricity crackles about him. As he walks down the corridors of MTV after guest-hosting a segment of *MTV Jams*, he is softly bum-rushed by Idalis, the leggy video jock, who whisks him off by the hand to meet other smiling ladies.

"People tries out about how I look because I'm on TV," says D'Angelo later of his sex symbol status. "It's got nothing to do with how I really look. It's not like I went to Italy and women were bugling all the time." That is, until he sat at his piano and performed. "I had an Armani suit on, I was under the lights, my hair was done, I had my game face on. That's when it's like that."

When D'Angelo took the stage at New York's Supper Club last summer—before *Brown Sugar* even blew up—it was definitely like that. While P and T-Boz made small talk outside the venue—along with other high-profile guests who would never get in—D'Angelo, onstage, was flanked by swooning feminine humans and Big Willie entertainment figures like Robert De Niro and John Singleton.

Perched behind a Fender Rhodes, swaying with about a third of Stevie Wonder's velocity, D'Angelo went through some hits and some covers, in Rakim-like, nonsmiling style. D'Angelo avoids the uninteresting aspects of today's R&B by way of his lyrical abstractness—like in hip hop. His words invite imagination and assume a high intelligence on the part of the listener. R. Kelly likens his women to jeeps and bank accounts; SWV blantly ponder the possibilities of penis penetration. But "Brown Sugar" could be about weed, or your Puerto Rican grandmother, or a fly cheerleader.

Twenty years from now, when cassette versions of Adina Howard's "Freak Like Me" grow moldy in Salvation Army basements, D'Angelo's "When We Get By" will be speedballing down the information superhighway. Kids born this year will sing along with D's ditties as teenagers, with a conviction and an understanding uniquely their own.

D'Angelo's shows—from the one at the Supper Club to his recent appearance on *The Late Show With David Letterman*—are bare-bones and bare-ass. There's D'Angelo, a bassist, a guitarist, some percussion people, and four serious black sisters who belt out soul behind D'Angelo as seriously as they would if they were up front. He mrauds for ears. People hear him.

At the Supper Club, there was a slender woman silhouetted down by the stage. A profoundly sensual feeling must have been rushing through her veins—she held a cigarette in the air, never changing her pose, for the entire show. Who could tell if she took a breath? Or blinked an eye? She was a silhouette, after all. Almost a shadow—but transfixed. □



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POWER MOVES

► After having his debut novel rejected by several publishers, **E. LYNN HARRIS** formed his own company in 1992. Inspired by trailblazer Terry McMillan, who self-shopped *Mama*, Harris sold 10,000 copies of *Invisible Life*—the story of a gay black male coming to terms with his identity—individually via black bookstores, beauty shops, and black expos. Impressed Doubleday execs quickly signed Harris to a multibook deal. *Invisible Life* was reissued, as was its sequel, *Just As I Am*. His latest, *And This Too Shall Pass*, became a *New York Times* best-seller. "If my success has helped others, that's great," says the "fartyish" Harris. "I'm happy it's opened the door for black male writers both gay and straight." *Tonya Pendleton*

dream hampton

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► When **AL PACINO** and **ROBERT DE NIRO** finally appeared on the same screen together last year in *Heat*, they were both so ruthless you could hardly tell the cop from the bad guy. These badass actors have always seemed to mirror each other, creating a group of strikingly heroic figures from complex antiheroes: What compares to Pacino as *Scarface*'s Tony Montana? Only De Niro as *Taxi Driver*'s Travis Bickle. Both Manhattan-born, studio-trained thespians use the desperation of their immigrant forebears to fuel existential angst that burns in their characters' eyes. If Pacino and De Niro sometimes become blurred in your mind, remember: 53-year-old Robert's the film producer and restaurateur; 56-year-old Al's sponsoring inner-city theater programs in his spare time. But they do seem to share the same essence: Unmistakably Italian, romantic, and cool, they loom large in the hip hop cosmos. *Joseph V. Tieffenthaler*

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NEXT CHAMBER

CHAIRMAN MAO TRANSPORTS YOU TO THE NEW WU HQ

After falling from a 30-foot tree and landing headfirst on the ground, I ended up in a hospital for three weeks. It left a hole in my skull, but I went back to the set to finish up my movie. Armour of God. Jackie Chan, last action hero

The sun popping up every morning, gliding all across the sky, all the way to the west.
Björk, Icelandic pop maestra

A black man taking care of his family.
Kirk Franklin, gospel singer



Every king has his castle: William Randolph Hearst had San Simeon, Charles Foster Kane had Xanadu, Hugh Hefner has his Playboy playground. Hell, even Willie Wonka handled his business within the illest chocolate factory ever witnessed by man or child. Mention the mere existence of a Wu-Tang Mansion to your typical card-carrying Clan disciple, and an outpouring of imagery floods their mental chambers: wrought-iron gates, guard dogs, a Bat-signal-like spotlight blazing the Wu's anti-Masonic insignia into the night sky, even a compound of Wu trainees engaged in lyrical kung fu battle ciphers.

Amid the suburban ranch houses and sprawling farms of outer New Jersey, the Wu Mansion (established 1996) contains none of the above. There are stacks of kung fu videos, and a Sony PlayStation dominates the large-screen TV in the living room, but this sparsely-furnished, two-story sanctuary of solitude doesn't fit the definition of luxury propagated by today's Moet-popping, name-dropping wannabe players. The Wu Mansion defies convention in much the same manner that Wu-Tang Clan has done throughout their unprecedented three-year run at the top of the rap game: by confounding expectations and setting its own rules.

It's nearly midnight, and the Wu workday is in full swing. A rumbling from beneath the earth's surface indicates special brews being concocted in the laboratory below. Decked in army fatigues, Prince Rakeme, a.k.a. the RZA, 26, feasts on an aluminum tin of leftover pasta while seated in his new lair. Though the control room's consoles are state-of-the-art, outside the soundproof sliding doors, the place is kind of a mess: Crates of well-worn records, keyboards, guitars, cardboard boxes, and instrument cases are strewn about. The disheveled lab still displays the unfortunate effects of floods that ravaged RZA's previous studio in the group's home base of Shao Lin, better known as Staten Island.

"I lost at least 300 beats in the flood," RZA explains between bites of food. "When the first Wu album came out, we had all the other albums ready. I had the shit with everybody's names on it, and everybody had at least 15 beats in their section. All that got washed up."

Three gold and two platinum discs later, things seem to have turned out okay nonetheless. The flood waters subsided, and with some assistance from RZA's brother, Divine, the Wu Mansion was successfully founded. But before anyone starts whistling the *Jeffersons* theme, note that RZA perceives this relocation as strictly business. "This is the same as the other lab we was at," he continues. "It's just bigger. From the project, to your own apartment, to your own little town house, to this. We don't look at all our shit as fame and glory; we just building."

Reggie Jackson once described his role on the great Yankees teams of the 1970s as "the straw that stirs the drink." Though a certain modesty prevents him from saying so, the RZA is in essence the straw that stirs the Wu-Tang elixir. As exclusive producer and cofounder of the group, along with his cousin Genius/the GZA (third cousin Ol' Dirty Bastard completes the family triad), the RZA's audio constructions and his ability to bring forth the best from his comrades have pushed the limits of musical acceptability like few pop phenomena in recent history.

Wu-Tang may be composed of nine distinct voices, but clearly the RZA need not strain to be heard. You could see it at MTV's studios during the Clan's recent performance of "America," the title track for the Red Hot Organization's groundbreaking AIDS fund-raiser *America Is*

Dying Slowly. On that afternoon, RZA's calm but authoritative tone moved the taping along at an efficient pace, encouraging and directing the audience and stage managers and (with Raekwon's very able assistance) even provoking the rest of the group to step up their onstage interaction for the cameras.

"I wouldn't take it as that the Clan revered me," RZA says, "because I see them, they all was a strong point in their own little squad. It wasn't the average nine niggaz. It was nine niggaz that would have been good to themselves. And maybe I seen it in them before they even did. They probably seen it in me and didn't know it was inside of themselves. That's the only difference between me and some of the brothers in the Clan."

As far as recognizing the talent in himself, RZA keeps the credit all in the family: "GZA knew I had it, and gave it to me. Boom. The first time I tried to give it to Dirty, he cursed me out and ran and said I wasn't his cousin no more. He couldn't comprehend the fuck what I was dealing with."

That's not an uncommon reaction even today, considering the unconventionalities of Wu-Tang's music. Liltng strings, slide guitars, gospelized vocals, banshee synth wails, Atari sound effects, even shattering glass have all infiltrated the arrangements of the Wu's five albums, singles, and remixes to date.

"I give 'em musical information," says RZA. "Everything is chaotic, but it don't even matter really, because what I like is gonna reflect what I lived. I lived life already. In 20 years, I seen 50 years' worth of shit. And whoever lived any similarity to any chamber that I lived, they're gonna relate to what I want to make."

"I make music that reflects my emotions. I can't sit there and make no crazy so-called R&B that you hear on the radio. That makes my stomach hurt. On the real, if I'm driving and that shit is on, I get nauseous. But I can sit there and give you this shit all day, every day."

As revolutionary as compositions like Raekwon's "Glaciers of Ice," GZA's "4th Chamber," or Ghost Face's "Motherless Child" may seem, RZA sees his sound as nothing more than an extension of the hip hop foundation he experienced in younger years. In a nod to that past, he and Ghost Face Killah have enlisted Staten Island's legendary Force M.D.s to appear on Ghost's new album, *Ironman*.

"Those niggaz was older than us. In '81, '82—that's when them niggaz was flippin' shit. They was representin' Shao Lin. But after that era, hip hop for us was dead in the sense of our area wasn't be heard from," RZA laments. "We was just hearing what everybody else was doin'. But niggaz out here was nice. Most people who learned about hip hop learned about it from the radio. We lived the shit. Hip hop drove me. When I first started sneakin' out to go to block parties, I was nine years old. Since I was three and a half, I was reading Mother Goose books—anything that rhymed. Dr. Seuss was my nigga. 'Cause I read it in rhythm."

"The first time you heard 'Wu-Tang' in the projects," he says, "is niggaz callin' the beer Old English 'Wu-Tang.' The Wu-Tang [kung fu] movie was so fly—Shao Lin and Wu Tang—it was slang for most anything that was fly. It didn't go no further than that. That was '88, maybe."

"I seen the flick already like too times," RZA recalls, as if it had all taken place yesterday. "These niggaz just started getting up on it. I had



JUST BUILDING

"This move right here was a move for the Clan," says RZA (center). "We came out here to be together, to get away from city life for a minute."



MASTERS OF THE MENTAL

"You know what the power is?" RZA asks. "Truth. And the truth is the magnet of attraction. To the best of my ability I deal with truth."

to explain the shit to 'em: Wu-Tang came from Shao Lin. This is Shao Lin right here—Staten Island. The whole thing just literally showed and proved itself. Wu-Tang was the sword style, and our tongue was the sword. Everything we lived as a child, we could explain it with something. Wu-Tang."

No longer just hip hop's most compelling group, Wu-Tang is now also a clothing and merchandising line with its own retail outlet and mail-order service (Wu-Wear), management company (Wu-Tang Management), and record label (RZA's newly formed Razor Sharp Records, distributed through Epic). They are taking care of business, and just beginning to taste the rewards.

But the trip from Staten Island to the Wu-Tang Mansion represents more than just a long commute. "Niggaz came from two-bedroom apartments with 11 moth-

erfuckers—four in a bed and four in a bed, and some on the floor," RZA recounts, his voice rising. "No food. And then when we did get a fuckin' nice apartment, rent is four months behind. No hot water. I'm talkin' about when [my brother] finished with them British Walkers, I get them shits."

"So as far as us comin' out here, this move right here was a move for the Clan. We came out here to be together, to get away from the city life. I felt like, 'Yo, man, let's get away for a minute.' Only select brothers gonna be able to come. That's how we gotta do it. What we gonna do next is buy one for Shao Lin, for our niggaz. That's how we think, man. We took care of ourselves, let's take care of our niggaz now. The least we can do for them is buy a building so that it's just open and you do what you want to do—pool, boxing, just do your shit. Grab the mikes, DJ—whatever you want, have a good time."

Does all this expansion—providing jobs, looking out for family and friends, and now the Mansion—go along with RZA's definition of empowerment?

"I'll say this," RZA reflects, "if you do it to gain power, how can you gain power? That means you doin' it for self again."

But what about C.R.E.A.M.? A lot of people seem to have picked up on the idea of success laid out in the Wu's hit single.

"What we mean by that is 'Cash rules everything around me,' but cash don't rule *me*," says RZA, pausing to collect his thoughts. "Power bears power, but you know what the power is? Truth. And the truth is the magnet of attraction. People are always attracted to truth. The funniest comedians tell the truth. And that's what we deal with. I ain't sittin' here on some saint shit," he says, laughing. "But to the best of my ability I deal with truth."

While as convincingly righteous as he wants to be, in the end it's RZA's creativity that's got him the sort of official Big Willie status everyone likes to talk about nowadays—one whose legacy will be remembered long after whatever slang we identify it by goes sour like last week's dairy. Because ultimately, cash only affords a person opportunities to explore his own potential. And it's this drive to keep exploring that maintains RZA's perspective on the big ball of wax, and preserves the likelihood of Wu-Tang's continued growth, artistic and otherwise.

"Even with all that knowledge right there and reading all these books, I never gave my childhood up," he says. "Video games—love 'em since I was a kid, still play 'em to this day. Kung fu movies—never gave it up, know what I'm sayin'? Once in a while I may even pick up two toys. See, the toys don't make the child the child. It's the child just exploring his own imagination. 'Cause a toy can't really do shit." He laughs again. "You go to make that thing do whatever you want it to do."

"If I'm exploring my own imagination, sometimes I go back to that, just to have that time to myself and recall my own imagination. Every thought, you see, can be expressed. People don't understand that principle right there. But it takes time to manifest thoughts into this physical world. In the mental world, you can think of this shit every second."

Here in Jersey, you can do the same. □



 **NOTHING ELSE
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The VIBE Q
CLIVE DAVIS,
ARISTA RECORDS'
LEGENDARY*
PRESIDENT AND
CEO, IS TRULY
RUNNING
THINGS. THINK
NOT? ASK
WHITNEY
HOUSTON, PUFFY
COMBS, TLC, THE
NOTORIOUS
B.I.G., OR L.A.
AND BABYFACE—
THEY ALL WORK
FOR HIM. CLIVE.
DAVIS ISN'T RAP-
PING ABOUT IT,
BUT REST
ASSURED, HE
LOVES IT WHEN
YOU CALL HIM...

BIG POPPA

BY MICHAEL A. GONZALES

The Beatles.
There's no
more powerful
display, politi-
cally or busi-
nesswise,
that
could affect all
aspects of pop-
ular thought in
a more revolu-
tionary way.

Rick Rubin,
rap-and-rock
alchemist

GUY GONZALES

Opposite (clockwise, from top): Jamie Foxx, Cee-Lo Green, Toni Braxton, B. Ing, Tyra Banks, Miles Davis.
This page (top, from left): Sly Stone, Dallas Austin, L.A. Reid and Babyface. (Middle, from left): Aretha Franklin, Puffy Combs.
Bottom, from left: Kenny G., Faith Evans, the Notorious B.I.G., Tony Rich. (Corner, top right): Goodee MoB

Being a real Big Willie has little to do with Presidential Rolexes and everything to do with continually paying your dues. Clive Davis, president and CEO of Arista Records, knows this. He should. Davis has been in the music business for 38 years. He's come to realize—or maybe he's always known—that tomorrow's hit is never promised.

Twenty years ago, Arista's claim to fame was the consistently platinum Barry Manilow. Now Clive Davis controls a musical empire that includes production and distribution deals with L.A. Reid and Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds' LaFace Records, Sean "Puffy" Combs' Bad Boy Entertainment, and Dallas Austin's Rowdy Records. On top of that, there is the indomitable Whitney Houston. Not to mention Kenny G, Annie Lennox, and Ace of Base. Plus a booming country label, Arista Nashville, that accounts for 20 percent of the label's overall revenue. Though they are signed to Arista's smaller labels, the Notorious B.I.G., Monica, Faith Evans, Fishbone, Toni Braxton, Craig Mack, 112, Total, OutKast, the Goodie Mob, Tim Rich, TLC, Donell Jones, and A Few Good Men all perform in the big house that Clive built.

"Davis is one of the few artistic chairmen," says Def Jam CEO Russell Simmons from his cellular, on the fly as usual. "He's able to guide massive talents and instill a sense of the big picture." Simmons cites the Notorious B.I.G.'s 1994 debut album as an example. "When Big left Uptown, *Ready to Die* only had one commercially viable single. When I heard it again, there were many more accessible-type singles. Clive gave Puffy a lot of direction on that project."

Combs also thinks the world of Davis. "He's one of the most impressive people I've ever met," Puffy says, also via cellular. "As far as making stars, making music, and making entertainment, Clive has total knowledge."

Motown CEO Andre Harrell says it simply (and from his desk): "Clive Davis is the best man in the record business today."

"I put in more hours now than I've ever put in," Davis says from a leather chair, rubbing his tired eyes. It's spring in New York City, and Davis, 63, is sitting behind a wooden desk cluttered with glass figurines and photos of his family. This office is where "the head cheese," as former Illegal MC Malik once called him, spends much of his life. Bad Boy remixes boom from suspended Tannoy speakers. Rough cuts of the latest Whitney Houston and Toni Braxton videos electrify his big television.

Davis, who L.A. Reid says "has a true passion for music," hails from a middle-class Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn and is a classic achiever. "I went through school on scholarships," he says. "I had after-school and summer jobs." He went to New York University, then Harvard Law School. Davis joined a small firm out of college and then went to Rosenman, Colin, Kaye, Petschek, and Freund—who represented CBS Records, Columbia's parent company. "Music was incidental in my life until luck played a role and I became head of Columbia Records." As an attorney, Davis was clearly on his J-O-B. Like he is now, as executive supremo.

Yet, after seven years of service at Columbia, Davis was fired in the summer of 1973—there were allegations about inappropriate use of company funds and of not paying taxes on vacation expenses. Though he plead-

ed guilty to the tax matter, some say that at the root of the drama were other Columbia execs who couldn't deal with Davis's monster ego. But as Fredric Dannen reported in 1990's *Hit Men*, "Clive said he never doubted for a moment that he would return to the record business after his downfall at CBS." And in 1974, Davis created Arista Records—named after his high school honor society.

Naming it after the business club would have made more sense, though. Last year was the best in Arista's history. The label generated \$425 million for Bertelsmann AG, its parent company. Arista also claimed to be the top label as far as market share in 1995—7.3 percent of the total market (of all the charting singles out there, Arista was responsible for 14.2 percent). L.A., Babyface, Puffy, and Dallas work for Clive, and Clive works for BMG. BMG must be happy as hell.

"I sensed change" is the first line of Davis's 1974 memoirs, *Clove: Inside the Record Business*. No doubt.

How was it at Columbia?

Columbia had an incredible classical record catalog. It was premier in the Broadway-show world with *My Fair Lady* and *West Side Story*....

I HAVE CHOSEN CAREFULLY. I'VE KEPT US LEAN. L.A. AND 'FACE AND PUFFY AND DALLAS HAVE BROUGHT ME MUSICIANS I WOULD NEVER HAVE FOUND ON MY OWN.

And jazz stuff with Miles Davis.

Incredible. They had Davis and some middle-of-the-road artists, like Barbra Streisand. I was a part of the contemporization of Columbia with my discovery of Janis Joplin; Blood, Sweat & Tears; Santana; Bruce Springsteen; Billy Joel; and Earth, Wind & Fire. I was making use, in a commercial sense, of horn figures. Miles wanted to know how to reach a large audience. He was selling 75,000 albums, and these acts came and sold a million, 2 million. I got Miles to open for Santana and Laura Nyro. It led to 1970's *Bitches Brew*, which led to the formation of Weather Report and of the Mahavishnu Orchestra.

One of the things that you did at Columbia—and I'm not sure if anybody had done much like it before—was bring Gamble and Huff there and set up Philadelphia International. Now you're doing basically the same thing with LaFace, Bad Boy, and Rowdy.

I had to determine how a company gets into R&B, because I wanted us in it. Gamble and Huff and I sought out each other because—and it's a principle that holds true today—you can have a lot of single hits but still not sell albums. They were blown away by what we were doing with Santana and Blood, Sweat & Tears. They had the vision of starting Philly International, and wanted guidance from somebody like myself who could be a creative partner, and guide their artists to major album sales and long-term careers. For me to find A&R men to do this would have been impossible. The best way

was to go to masters of hitmaking to encourage them to sign artists. And of course they came through with Harold Melvin and Teddy Pendergrass, with Billy Paul, and the O'Jays.

Would you go to Philly and oversee what they were doing?
They had full creative control. Did it all on their own. Then they would come and play it for me and ask me to do my thing, so to speak.

What is your thing?
My thing, I just do it. It's too pedestrian to try and define. I'm not out to—it's not appropriate.

What do you hear in a song that makes you say, "Okay, this is for one of my artists"?

I only submit what I consider to be potential singles, because artists can come up with their own album cuts. I might listen to a thousand songs to suggest half a dozen.

How did LaFace come about?

I realized that what I'd been doing for my artists—the art of finding hit songs and matching them with producers who can deliver both the arrangement and production to an artist who has a God-given voice—was a dying art. To the extent that R&B was becoming more track-oriented, you had to get producers who

often were self-contained writer/producers. I knew that with Whitney's third album we'd have to make some strides to give her the urban roots that she inherited from God. So I went to L.A. and Babyface, and worked on "I'm Your Baby Tonight."

Great song.

And it was their first to go to No. 1 on *Billboard*'s pop chart—after L.A. and Face had 15 No. 1 R&B singles. I got a call six months later from [then owner of Tabu Productions and current Motown chairman] Clarence Avant. He said that L.A. and Babyface had ideas for a label. He said they were entertaining offers from several companies—I think Motown, Epic, and MCA—but that they really loved the relationship we'd entered into, and would I entertain the prospect of matching these offers? Not outbidding but matching. I said yes, and literally, within 24 hours, that was the deal.

No pun intended.

Right. [Laughter]

Some of their first releases—Damien Dane's 1991 album and Jermaine Jackson's You Said that same year—didn't sell much. Were you concerned?

The lesson learned from those two artists was that you can have hit records but there is also something called star appeal. What we have at Arista—whether it be the Grateful Dead, Carly Simon, Annie Lennox, Aretha Franklin, Dionne Warwick, or Whitney Houston—are artists with long-term careers. It's not a matter of doing a hit record with this or that artist and then

finding out there's no one to fill Radio City Music Hall.

I don't give labels deals unless I feel that people—like L.A. and 'Face—will benefit from the partnership and go out and find stars worthy of the songs they write and produce. We had the Braxtons as a group under contract to Arista, but L.A. and 'Face had the foresight to pick Toni Braxton from the group, when each of the girls was talented. They've shown that they have an eye and an ear for starmaking.

You have two of the biggest divas, Whitney and Toni...

And there's room for more. We also have Faith Evans. Plus Monica and Deborah Cox.

Talk about Whitney a little bit.

Whitney has range, stunning beauty, depth. She reaches into words and brings to them a whole new level of understanding.

Did it bother you when critics would say she wasn't black enough—that her singing wasn't black enough?

It bothered her and me. I mean, Whitney is a black woman. It's silly and shallow, the criticism you get when you cross over. I see all these companies struggling and releasing everything R&B, then three months later releasing it to Top 40. Every song Whitney and I worked on together exploded at Top 40 as it exploded R&B.

The public loves Whitney, but critics always—

It's not just Whitney. It's Barbra Streisand, it's Aretha when she crosses over. Critics—rock critics—feel that if you don't write your own material, you're just an entertainer, and you're not as good as a socially conscious singer-songwriter or rebellious rock artist. That's mixing apples and oranges. Ella Fitzgerald was no less great because she didn't write her material. You pigeonhole an artist when you say, "Aretha, you must only do gospel or street R&B." It's unfair because you're pigeonholing them into an economic strata where they never can pay for their family's education or their bills.

How did you bring Aretha Franklin to Arista? What was she going through at the time?

She had no creative partner. She'd had that for years at Atlantic with Jerry Wexler. Aretha was aware that I'd found songs that marked Dionne's return. So she called me. We had lunch at her home. She said, "I miss Jerry greatly and need someone to work with me in that same manner. Would you want me in that same manner? Would you want me?" I immediately said yes.

A kind of generational question. There's this East Coast-West Coast thing going on: Puffy, Suge. What do you feel about that?

Whatever isolated rivalry that's going on is not generational. Music is a competitive industry. And like the film industry, you end up knowing your competitors. When I was head of Columbia, of course I knew [Atlantic Records founder] Ahmet Ertegun, [Warner Bros. chairman] Mo Ostin, and [Motown founder] Berry Gordy. You don't have the situation to yourself. So you compete. So if there is—and I don't know the details—a rivalry between two labels, I don't think it speaks for this generation any more than [former Walt Disney Studios chairman] Jeffrey Katzenberg feuding with [Walt Disney Company chairman]

Michael Eisner speaks for another.

You hear stories about Suge and Tupac pulling guns on Puffy and Biggie or whatever...

If any of that is taking place, it has nothing to do with the state of the record industry, nor should it be a categorization of what it is to compete in the '90s. That would be horrifying.

Did Puffy come to you with Bad Boy, or you to him?

I was not privy—which is probably just as well—to who did what for whom [as far as] Puffy and Andre Harrell and others. All I knew was that Puffy was a young black entrepreneur whose credentials were told to me

music he wanted to do.

What did you think when you first heard the Notorious B.I.G. and Craig Mack?

Label deals should do things that you can't do yourself. I have chosen carefully. I've kept us lean. L.A. and 'Face and Puffy and Dallas have brought me music I would never have found on my own.

Dallas strikes me as introspective, and very into making music as an art form—not the type who's concerned if Fishbone go gold.

I'm around to remind him that he should be concerned if they go gold. [Laughter] Every record doesn't have to be a home run, but if you think a record can only sell 100,000 copies, then only spend \$50,000 making it.

How do you deal with troubled artists—whether it's Sly Stone or TLC or Miles Davis?

Because an artist is musically talented doesn't mean that they're the most knowledgeable in every area. You try to bring your experience, your expertise, and your sense of fairness to each situation. Sometimes [my view] will coincide with an artist's, and sometimes it won't. But they'll get an honest count and an honest reaction.

Let's talk about the Waiting to Exhale soundtrack.

Babyface was chosen by Forest Whitaker to write a few songs, with Whitney's approval. As Face kept writing more, he'd play them for me. I was awed by the magnitude of what he was accomplishing. My task was to use my position and credibility with 20th Century Fox to make sure the music made the film. L.A., 'Face, and I had already had the experience of *Boomerang*—a great soundtrack that's barely in the movie.

What do you tell people who look to you for advice?

If you love music, stick to it. If you have any ideas that it doesn't require enormous work, stay away.

You probably hear a lot of things in terms of your colleagues—Andre Harrell, Russell Simmons. Do you see any mistakes they're making, any things that you wouldn't do?

Sure, but I don't think I'll talk about it in a public forum. I'd be happy to consult with them in private interviews. [Smiles] I have a good relationship with Andre and Russell. We vacation at the same time in Saint Barts. There's mutual respect among the three of us.

Somebody told me recently that Harrell told them he wanted to be Clive Davis when he grew up.

He's even said that to me. I take it as a very nice compliment.

What else do you want to do?

I am blessed to be doing exactly what I want. I'm grateful that I've done well. The challenge is to still do it. Not to try something different—because you try something different with every new artist, with every new kind of music. The challenge for me is to start a country label from scratch, to extend into cutting-edge hip hop or rap through my joint ventures—to find new artists. History doesn't repeat. It's not automatic. The challenge is to keep doing it. To keep doing it well. □



CLIVE AND DIRECT

"I don't talk figures. I don't talk business. I don't talk oldid. I make music connections."

on the phone by Bert Padell, Puffy's [then] accountant. I knew what Puffy had in mind was his own label. I called L.A., because L.A. had been supportive of my making the Rowdy deal with Dallas. L.A. had also been in touch with Puffy, L.A. was there. Neither felt threatened. Puffy was more street, and L.A. and 'Face were working more, they felt, for blue-collar workers.

I don't talk figures. I don't talk business. I don't outbid.

I don't even know what the terms are. Puffy and I

found a music connection. I think he was happy to meet a music man. I found him unusual in his marketing perspective, creative visions, sense of himself and the



POWER MOVES

► In 1992, when Andre Young left N.W.A and Ruthless Records and started recording *The Chronic*, his future looked uncertain. N.W.A were a true rap powerhouse, but DR. DRE—whose musical versatility proved him unwilling to rest on his laurels—had grown distracted as the group disintegrated over money squabbles. Four years, several multiplatinum releases, and \$125 million later, 31-year-old Dre has left Death Row Records, the label he cofounded with Suge Knight. What Dre thought would be a way to explore jazz, rock, and reggae became just another cartel confining his artistry and vision. Dre's taking his sound to his own label, which will be distributed by Interscope Records. Its first single, "East Coast Killas/West Coast Killas" (featuring a united front of East and West Coast MCs), is calculated to squash beef, get back to dope beats and rhymes, and show the "gangstas" who really wears the pants. Ronin Ro

► A rite of passage inflicted on an estimated 85 million women compelled FAUZYIA KASINGA to flee her home-land of Togo, Africa. In October 1994, with the help of an older sister and a fake passport, 17-year-old Kasenga escaped having tribal elders "scrape my woman parts off." She came to the U.S. seeking asylum; instead, she was taken to a detention center and shackled. "All my spirit is gone," she said after a judge refused her initial plea. But last June, she took her case to the Board of Immigration Appeals, which granted her asylum, recognizing genital mutilation as persecution and setting a precedent for all women. Checkmate. Karen R. Good



► When it comes to Madonna, lots of folks can say they've been there and done that, but only JELLYBEAN BENITEZ can say he built her career. After remixing the Blessed Mother's "Holiday" in 1983, Benitez went on to produce club-mix albums, film soundtracks, and work with Big Willies like Michael Jackson and Paul McCartney. Now 38, Jellybean's still making moves. His ja Music Publishing owns songs by the Notorious B.I.G. and Mary J. Blige. And in October, look for Benitez's new label, H.O.L.A. (Home of Latino Artists) Recordings. Distributed by PolyGram, H.O.L.A.'s hip hop, R&B, and dancehall artists can rock the boulevard in Spanish as well as English. Some DJs never fade, they just get paid—know what I mean, Jellybean?

Photo: Steve Eichner



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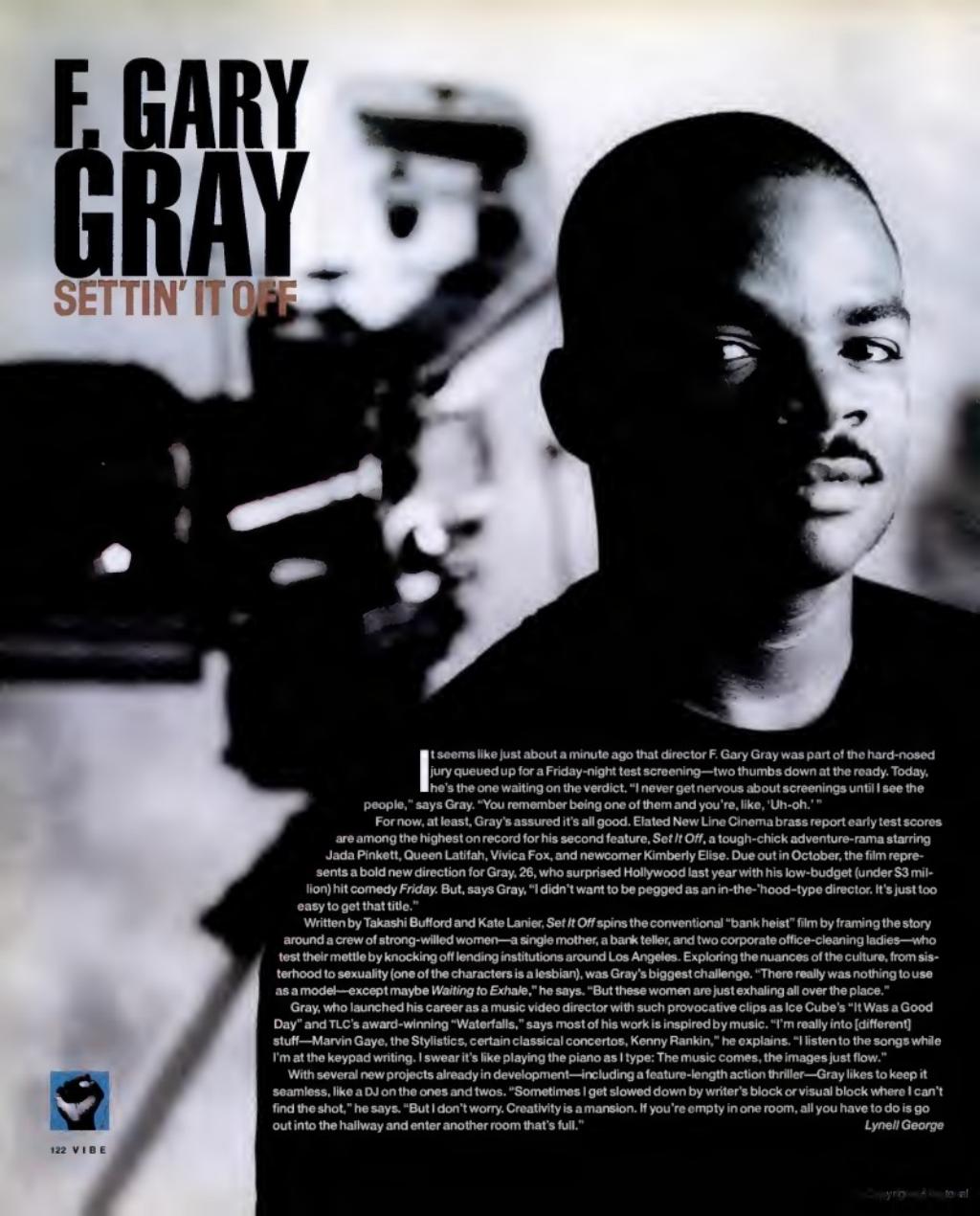


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F. GARY GRAY

SETTIN' IT OFF



It seems like just about a minute ago that director F. Gary Gray was part of the hard-nosed jury queued up for a Friday-night test screening—two thumbs down at the ready. Today, he's the one waiting on the verdict. "I never get nervous about screenings until I see the people," says Gray. "You remember being one of them and you're, like, 'Uh-oh.'"

For now, at least, Gray's assured it's all good. Elated New Line Cinema brass report early test scores are among the highest on record for his second feature, *Set It Off*, a tough-chick adventure-rama starring Jada Pinkett, Queen Latifah, Vivica Fox, and newcomer Kimberly Elise. Due out in October, the film represents a bold new direction for Gray, 26, who surprised Hollywood last year with his low-budget (under \$3 million) hit comedy *Friday*. But, says Gray, "I didn't want to be pegged as an in-the-'hood-type director. It's just too easy to get that title."

Written by Takashi Bufford and Kate Lanier, *Set It Off* spins the conventional "bank heist" film by framing the story around a crew of strong-willed women—a single mother, a bank teller, and two corporate office-cleaning ladies—who test their mettle by knocking off lending institutions around Los Angeles. Exploring the nuances of the culture, from sisterhood to sexuality (one of the characters is a lesbian), was Gray's biggest challenge. "There really was nothing to use as a model—except maybe *Waiting to Exhale*," he says. "But these women are just exhaling all over the place."

Gray, who launched his career as a music video director with such provocative clips as Ice Cube's "It Was a Good Day" and TLC's award-winning "Waterfalls," says most of his work is inspired by music. "I'm really into [different] stuff—Marvin Gaye, the Stylistics, certain classical concertos, Kenny Rankin," he explains. "I listen to the songs while I'm at the keypad writing. I swear it's like playing the piano as if type: The music just flows."

With several new projects already in development—including a feature-length action thriller—Gray likes to keep it seamless, like a DJ on the ones and twos. "Sometimes I get slowed down by writer's block or visual block where I can't find the shot," he says. "But I don't worry. Creativity is a mansion. If you're empty in one room, all you have to do is go out into the hallway and enter another room that's full."

Lynell George





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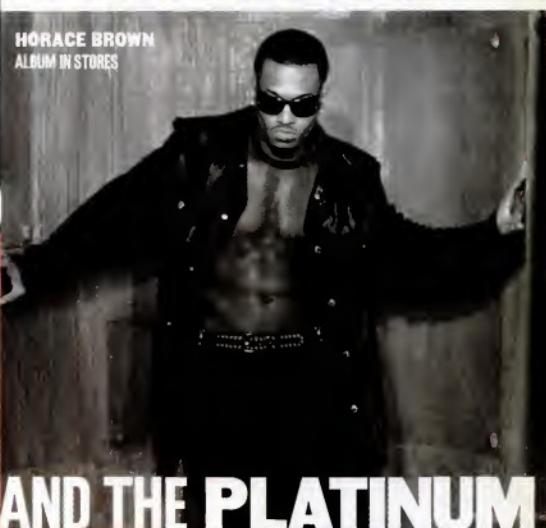
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FILM NOIR

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out scenes from
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flicks than a cast
of urban music
superstars?

*Photographs by
Guy Aroch.
Styling by Emil
Wilbekin*



Profile

Not only does Biggie share the name of Hitchcock's 1946 film *Notorious*, but the two big guys also share an affinity for making cameos—Hitchcock in his own films and Biggie on everybody else's singles. *Black suit by Charles Jourdan; white dress shirt by Lazo; tie by Rochester Couture*

Edge of Your Seat

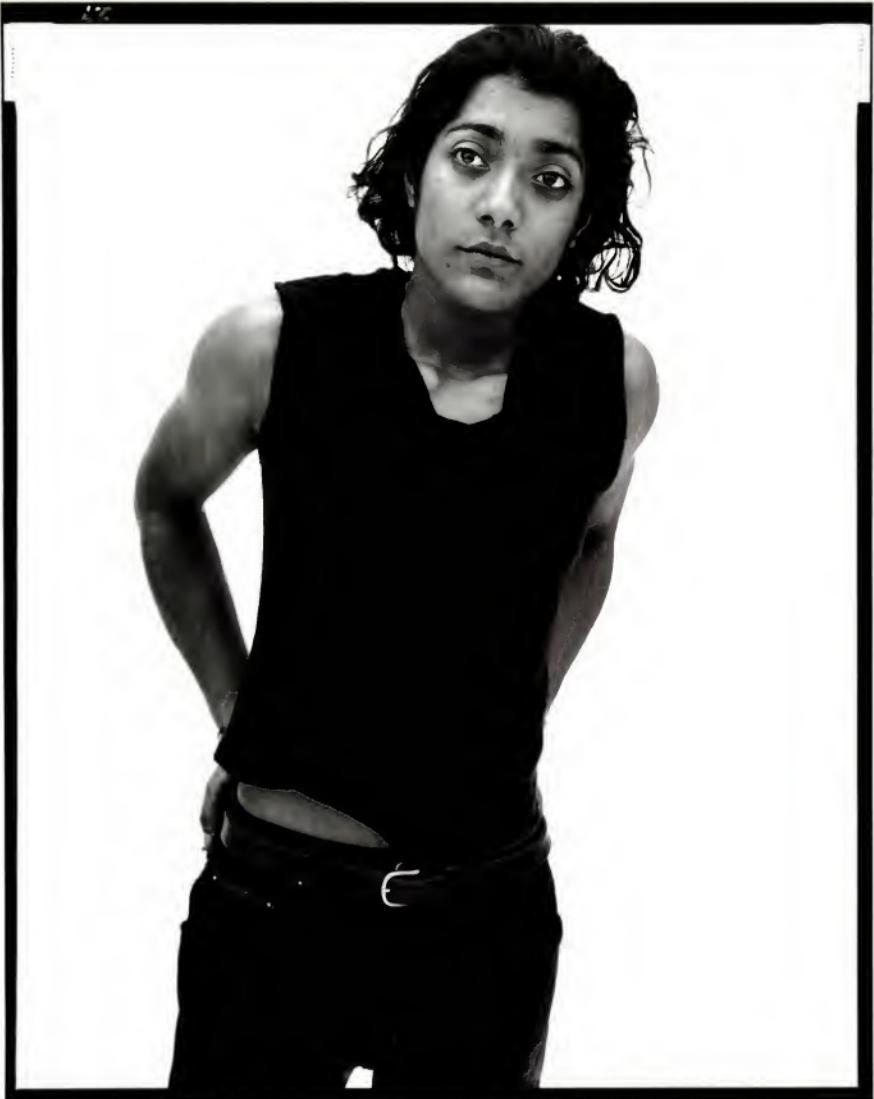
Psycho (1960) had more drama than a Foxy Brown remix. But this 19-year-old lyricist could probably fend off psycho killer Norman Bates with her sassy ghetto-girl rhymes. Yellow-and-purple silk slip dress by Versace



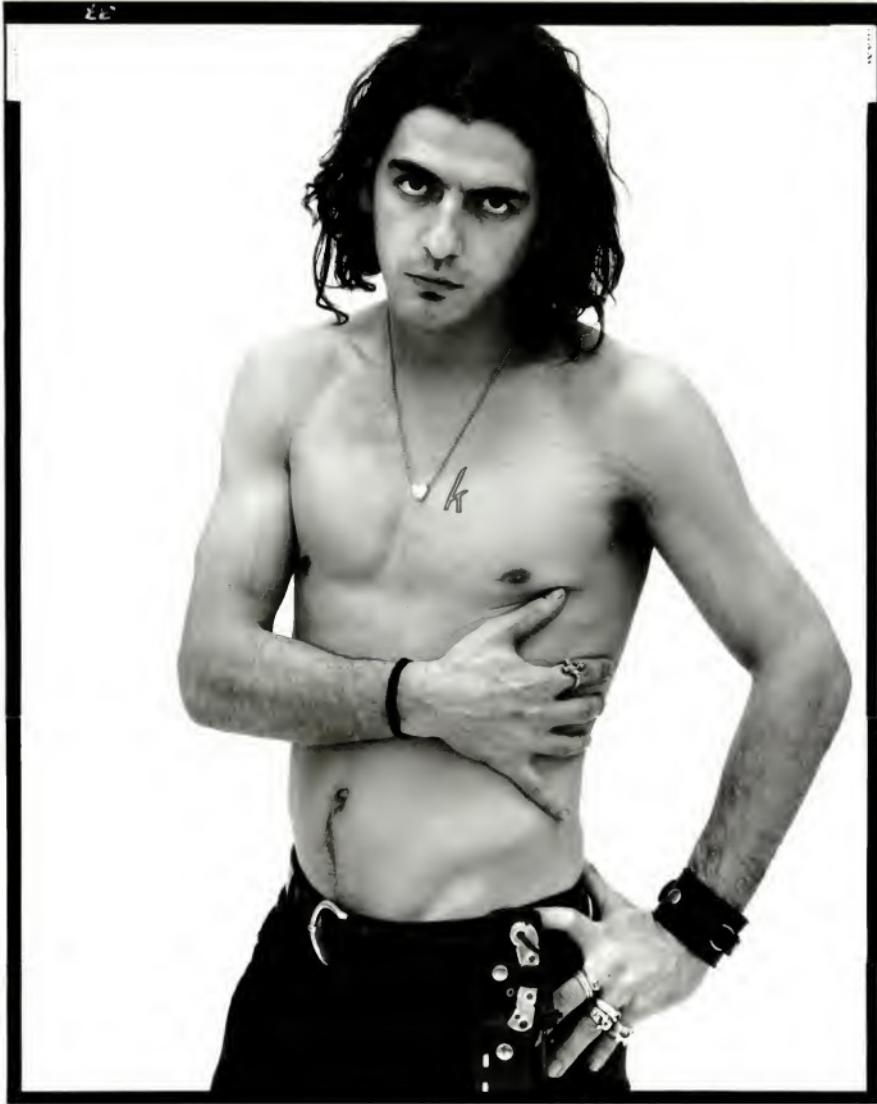
Adventure

Climbing Mount Rushmore while fleeing the enemy in 1959's *North by Northwest* might not be out of the ordinary for Hitchcock, but for R&B newcomers Monica and Kenny Lattimore, it's a totally new and different experience. Kenny: White dress shirt and black pants, both by Joop! belt by Guess? Monica: Red shirt dress by Joop!





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On the Run

Low-flying planes that shoot bullets,
like the one in *North by Northwest*, don't
bother Sadat X (of Brand Nubian fame),
at least not according to the lyrics on his
new single "Hang 'Em High." Navy blue
wool suit and white cotton dress shirt,
both by Versace; silver satin tie by Ralph
Lauren; shoes by Guess?

Scared Sexy

Fly girl Monifah knows how to look good under pressure. Here she takes her cue from actress Tippi Hedren, whose glamorous looks wowed moviegoers in the 1963 classic *The Birds*. *Pink wool crepe suit by Dolce & Gabbana; cream lizard-stamped leather handbag by D&G*





Love Scene

Between the diamond thefts, murders, and sabotage, Hitchcock always threw in a little romance. Mary J. Blige and Casper, the hip hop couple of the moment, look to 1958's *Vertigo* for sartorial inspiration and a moment of intimacy. Mary: Off-white coat by Joop!; vintage scarf. Casper: Navy blue suit and off-white dress shirt, both by Joop!; mauve satin tie by Ralph Lauren; hat by Makins Studio



► Power was never a goal," **OPRAH WINFREY** once said of her career. "You should stand for excellence, and what will happen will happen." Happen it did: Her Chicago-based chaffest now reaches 15 million to 20 million Americans and can be seen in 119 countries. The 42-year-old host/producer makes things happen—in viewers' lives and on the stock exchange. Last year, when Oprah pondered her show's swan song, the stock of its syndicator, King World, dropped 3 percent. After her broadcast about mad cow disease, the price of beef slumped. The second-highest paid human in show biz recently snagged a movie production deal with Disney. Now, can you imagine if power was her goal? —Ororonike Idowu

POWER MOVES

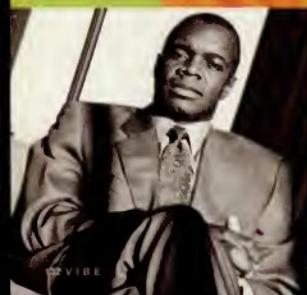
► In the old neighborhood, whoever had the best "yo mama" jokes was treated as a celebrity. But from Brooklyn to Beverly Hills, comedian **CHRIS ROCK** has taken his talent to the heights. The self-made Rock star has many reasons to smile in '96: He's campaign correspondent for Comedy Central's *Politically Incorrect*; the voice of Nike's "Little Penny" Hardaway; and the star of 1-800-COLLECT commercials, the upcoming film *Beverly Hills Ninja*, and the HBO special *Bring the Pain*. From his days on Saturday Night Live through big-screen roles in Cbs4, *New Jack City*, *Boomerang*, and many more, Chris always portrayed the kind of grit-iron ghettoetics that usually shine only from the back of a school bus. When he shows up at this year's presidential conventions, he'll be brandishing that sharp-edged sarcasm in prime time and proving that some rocks do bounce back.

Bonzi Malone



◀ **ALPHONSE "BUDDY" FLETCHER JR.**, president and CEO of Fletcher Asset Management, doesn't invest money for a living, but for a killing. Fletcher, 39, has created a tiny supernova in the mutual fund universe, rewarding investors with awesome returns—over 300 percent annually for the past five years! Fletcher was a rising star at the brokerage firm Kidder Peabody while in his twenties, but when Kidder jerked him out of \$2 million in bonuses, he sued for back pay, won, and started FAM. Still, despite his estimated \$50 million worth, Fletcher remains value-conscious. Witness his Zenith TV. "Zenith makes a good television," he insists. It also makes a hell of a stock. FAM recently bought a bunch of it low, then watched it climb in value—over 300 percent.

Harry Allen





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CHARTER MEMBER

"I want my stuff always on the left side of the Billboard charts. Where the winners are."



PHOTOGRAPH BY TROY PLOTA

THE SONG OF THE SOUTH

What I want," says Jermaine Dupri, "is for my records to be everywhere." For Dupri, even a friendly game of pool is intense competition. He's a vehement mixture of desire and madness. A multi-millionaire label owner/president and one of the most sought-after record producers in the world, Dupri retains a certain playfulness—but there's no doubt that he means business. "I want my stuff *always* on the left side of the *Billboard* charts," he says. "Where the winners are."

He acknowledges, though, that his stuff already pretty much lives there—and has for a while. Dupri discovered Kris Kross, then wrote, arranged, and produced the duo's multiplatinum debut album, 1992's *Totally Krossed Out*. Xscape, the first group signed to Dupri's So So Def Records, debuted in 1993 with their million-selling "Just Kickin' It," which went to No. 1 on *Billboard's* Hot R&B Singles Chart.

WHETHER SHOOTING POOL OR MAKING HIT RECORDS, HOTSHOT PRODUCER JERMAINE DUPRI HAS ONE GOAL: TO BE THE BEST. BY MICHAEL A. GONZALES

The group's *Hummin' Comin'* at 'Cha' went platinum as well and spawned another gold single with "Understanding." And the foursome's sophomore album, *Off the Hook*, has already sold more than 1 million copies.

In 1994 there was Da Brat's *Funkdafied*. The title song went to the top of the Hot Rap Singles chart and, along with the album, went on to platinum status. In addition, Dupri has written and produced hits for TLC, the Notorious B.I.G., Mariah Carey, Aaliyah, and for the forthcoming New Edition reunion project. "Busy!" he asks himself. "Yes."

By combining street sampled textures with familiar hooks and seriously laid-back flavor, Dupri, 24, has captured the ease of a generation reared on hip hop but in love with melody. "It's always been my plan," he says, "to become major-league." Unlike the gangsta-inclined George Clinton/Roger Troutman boogie that defines Suge Knight's electrifying Death Row Records (at least when Dr. Dre was there) or Puffy Combs's notoriously smooth aural fashion show, Dupri's sound is down-home, basically bassy, and lusciously—marketably—bubblegum.

Dupri was inspired by the poppy hip hop of producer Hurby "Luvbug" Azor (Salt-N-Pepa, Kid 'n Play), new jack swinger Teddy

Riley, and his own musician/manager father Michael Mauldin (now the executive vice president of Columbia Records Group's Black Music division). "I got my first drum kit when I was three years old," Dupri says. "My father was the road manager for groups like Brick, the S.O.S. Band, and Cameo, and I'd go to rehearsals with him. Then I'd try to do what they did." Dupri's sipping on a Dr. Pepper in the basement, "his" part of the Atlanta home he shares with his mother, Tina Mauldin. "I used to make these So So Def mix tapes to sell in school, and the name just stuck."

Jermaine Dupri Mauldin was named by his dad after Cornell Dupee, who played guitar for Donny Hathaway. "Since I was putting Jermaine in the local shows I was promoting," says Mauldin from his Manhattan office, "we dropped his last name, because we wanted to play down the fact that he was my son." Years later, as copartner in the Florida-based Entertainment Resources International, Papa Mauldin also managed Kris Kross and Xscape, plus Arrested Development and Carson Wheeler. Father's and son's lives are massively intertwined.

Mauldin got Jermaine his first job making music when Dupri was just 14. In 1987 he was to produce the debut album of a girl trio called Silk Tymes Leather. "The people at Geffen were nervous because I was young," says Jermaine. "So they got a coproducer, Joe Nicolo, to work with me." Known as Joe the Butcher in his hometown of Philly, Nicolo was also producing tracks for DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince.

Silk Tymes Leather's *It Ain't Where Ya From* was only a moderate success when it was finally released in 1990, but Dupri was honing

his craft. And he was searching for people to ignite it. In an Atlanta mall, Dupri happened upon two preteen MCs—Chris Smith and Chris Kelly. When Nicolo started Ruffhouse Records in 1989, Jermaine Dupri and Michael Mauldin brought him Kris Kross.

The smell of fried chicken drifts down the carpeted stairs to the cavern Dupri has transformed into a wonderland of noisy arcade games and giant television screens. There's also a microwave oven, soda-stacked mini-fridge, and a boom box blasting Whodini's 1984 classic "Five Minutes of Funk." Practically a Nike poster child in a white logo shirt and black cap, Dupri dances around his Olhausen pool table to the old song by his latest signing.

"I was determined to be the ultimate Atlanta B-boy," he says with a grin. "I was wearing shell toes with no laces, Lee's with the crease. When my father got the gig doing production for the Fresh Fest [a 1984 rap tour that featured Run-D.M.C., Kurtis Blow, the Fat Boys, and Whodini], I would dance for the audience before the show."

Now listening to "Runnin' 'Em," a bomb track he created with the Lost Boyz for Whodini's forthcoming comeback, Dupri rocks in

The government locking down Atlanta for the Freaknik. That was power. Actually, that was martial law. Cee-Lo, the Goodie Mob

Earthquakes. When you experience one, you realize God



is the strongest and man is helpless.
Heavy D, rapper/actor/label boss

Someone knowing how to access information from the Internet.
Brandy, Renaissance girl

his chair like a fiend addicted to beats. MC Lyte sticks her head through the door, looking for the tracks they worked over the night before. Though lots of his cash comes from sitting behind a desk, what Dupri will always truly love is making music. "I don't go to the studio to smoke weed or to play around," he says. "Smoking weed slows down



Jermaine Dupri Mauldin, six months

the process. I'm able to make a finished song in a matter of hours."

As Dupri runs to locate Lyte's music, she sits near the sound board. "Jermaine's studied my style," she says. "He's goin' down the line to where I'm going. Plus he knows his shit." After Dupri bounces back into the room, gulping on a fresh can of Dr. Pepper, he racks the balls for the last of about 20 games he's played this night—a lot of them against himself. Our conversation veers into the high-profile images of Suge Knight and Puffy Combs. "We talk about pool. And we talk about the long run.

"I'm going to be around longer than Puffy or Suge," he says, leaning over the table. "Some people don't feel like I paid my dues, but I've been through all the bullshit. There's a song on the Snoop album where he talks about being at a concert. He describes it—and it's the Fresh Fest he's talking about."

Jermaine Dupri stands up straight. Though he must have told this story a hundred times, he's still amazed and kind of somber. "At the Fresh Fest, Snoop was in the audience. I was on the stage." □

reappearing act

An old friend pulls Whodini back to the front

Somewhere in a desolate area of Shao Lin—official Wu-Tang Clan territory—Ecstacy, Jalli, and Grandmaster Dee, better known as the legendary hip hop trio Whodini, are finishing up album number Six after five years out of the game. Ecstacy no longer sports his trademark cowboy hat, and gone are the little dance steps once imitated by millions of Whodini fans everywhere.

In the dim, candlelit sitting room of the Staten Island recording studio, all three Whodini members are exhausted. They've endured three sleepless nights, and the native Brooklynites are more than ready to return to Atlanta—their home since Jermaine Dupri asked them to become a part of his So So Def family more than a year ago. Ecstacy is confident about this summer's Six, which features the talents of Dupri, Easy Mo Bee, and the Lost Boyz. Still, the unpredictable nature of hip hop fans has him concerned. After all, not since 1987's *Open Sesame* has the group produced a full album. "When you've been in the business for a while, your support diminishes," Ecstacy says. "Rock fans won't let the Rolling Stones die. It should be like that in hip hop."

During the mid-1980s, undeniably classic songs such as "Freaks Come Out at Night," "One Love," "Friends," and "Big Mouth" made the power of Whodini seem never-ending. But as the climate and sound of hip hop changed from upbeat and braggadocious to Afrocentric and gangsta-like, Whodini were unable to keep up. Plus their relationships with then manager Russell Simmons and then label Jive Records got strained, and the crew ended up experiencing personal financial difficulties. "It wasn't fun anymore," says Ecstacy. "It became more of a pressure situation than something I enjoyed. We said, 'Fuck all that shit. We're tired.' "

But Dupri saw through all that. They are old and talented friends—in fact, when Dupri first met Whodini, he was still wearing Underoos. Whodini were one of the headliners on 1984's Fresh Fest, and it got to the point where if you saw the group performing, Jermaine Dupri was surely just a couple dance steps behind. "He became part of our family," says Ecstacy proudly.

"And when we got into a situation a couple years ago when we weren't with a company, he accepted us. The love came back around to help us later on in life—that's a lesson for us all."

Whodini, who claim to be the first rap group ever to go platinum (with 1984's *Escape*), want the world to acknowledge that they paved the way for many artists. "You got to tell niggas in '96 what you did," says Ecstacy. "I tried to leave it to history, but historians are gettin' shit wrong!" Whodini school plenty of fools on the new album. "Keep Running Back" is fly, and so R&B that the trio might as well be singing. The dope, straight-up Brooklyn track is called "Can't Get Enough." "VIP," on the other hand, is smooth—very West Coast.

"I stopped trying to predict things," says Jalli. "I don't get excited anymore." But after much soul-searching and relearning their art, Ecstacy is smiling 'cause he's got a good feeling about Whodini's future. "It's fun again. It ain't no 'Friends'/'Freaks Come Out at Night' shit—but it's still Jalli, X, and Dee."

Shani Saxon



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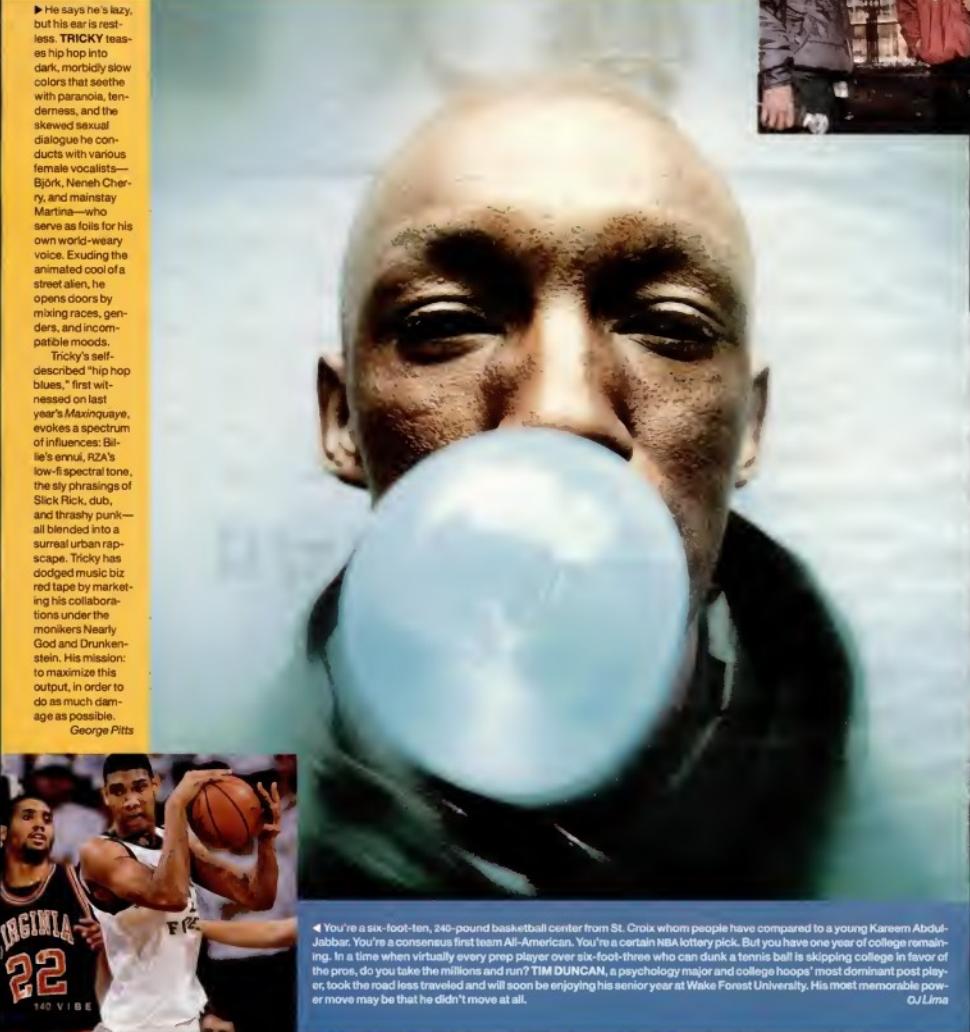
POWER MOVES

► He says he's lazy, but his ear is restless. TRICKY teases hip hop into dark, morbidly slow colors that seethe with paranoia, tenderness, and the skewed sexual dialogue he conducts with various female vocalists—Björk, Neneh Cherry, and mainstay Martina—who serve as foils for his own world-weary voice. Exuding the animated cool of a street alien, he opens doors by mixing races, genders, and incompatible moods.

Tricky's self-described "hip hop blues," first witnessed on last year's *Maxinquaye*, evokes a spectrum of influences. Bille's emul, RZA's low-fi spectral tone, the sly phrasings of Slick Rick, dub, and thrash punk—all blended into a surreal urban rap-scape. Tricky has dodged music biz red tape by marketing his collaborations under the monikers Nearly God and Drunkenstein. His mission: to maximize this output, in order to do as much damage as possible.

George Pitts

► "Around here, there's so much killing you've got to harden yourself from within," says 16-year-old reporter LEALAN JONES about his Chicago neighborhood. "If you don't, you'll be sobbing every day." Instead, he and his best friend, LLOYD NEWMAN, 17, took to the streets. Armed with a microphone, they let their community speak, turning up the volume for the nation to hear. National Public Radio aired the results. The 14 Stories of Eric Morse, which examines the life and death of a 5-year-old dropped from the 14th floor of a Chicago housing project, and *Ghetto Life 101*. Jones and Newman will continue their journalism careers, but they've already given us an earful. Listen up. —Omoronke Idowu

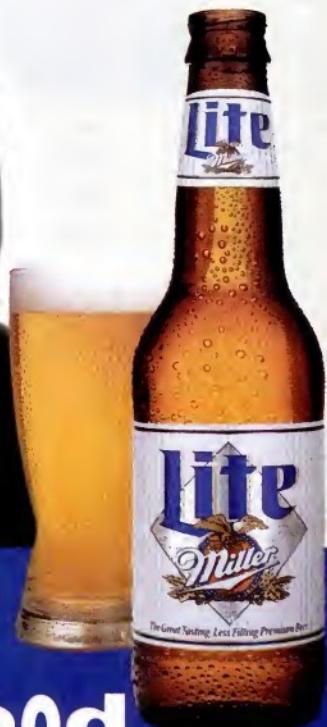


◀ You're a six-foot-ten, 240-pound basketball center from St. Croix whom people have compared to a young Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. You're a consensus first team All-American. You're a certain NBA lottery pick. But you have one year of college remaining. In a time when virtually every prep player over six-foot-three who can dunk a tennis ball is skipping college in favor of the pros, do you take the millions and run? TIM DUNCAN, a psychology major and college hoops' most dominant post player, took the road less traveled and will soon be enjoying his senior year at Wake Forest University. His most memorable power move may be that he didn't move at all.

OJ Lima



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I got my threads,
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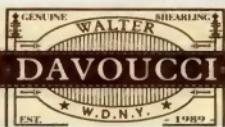
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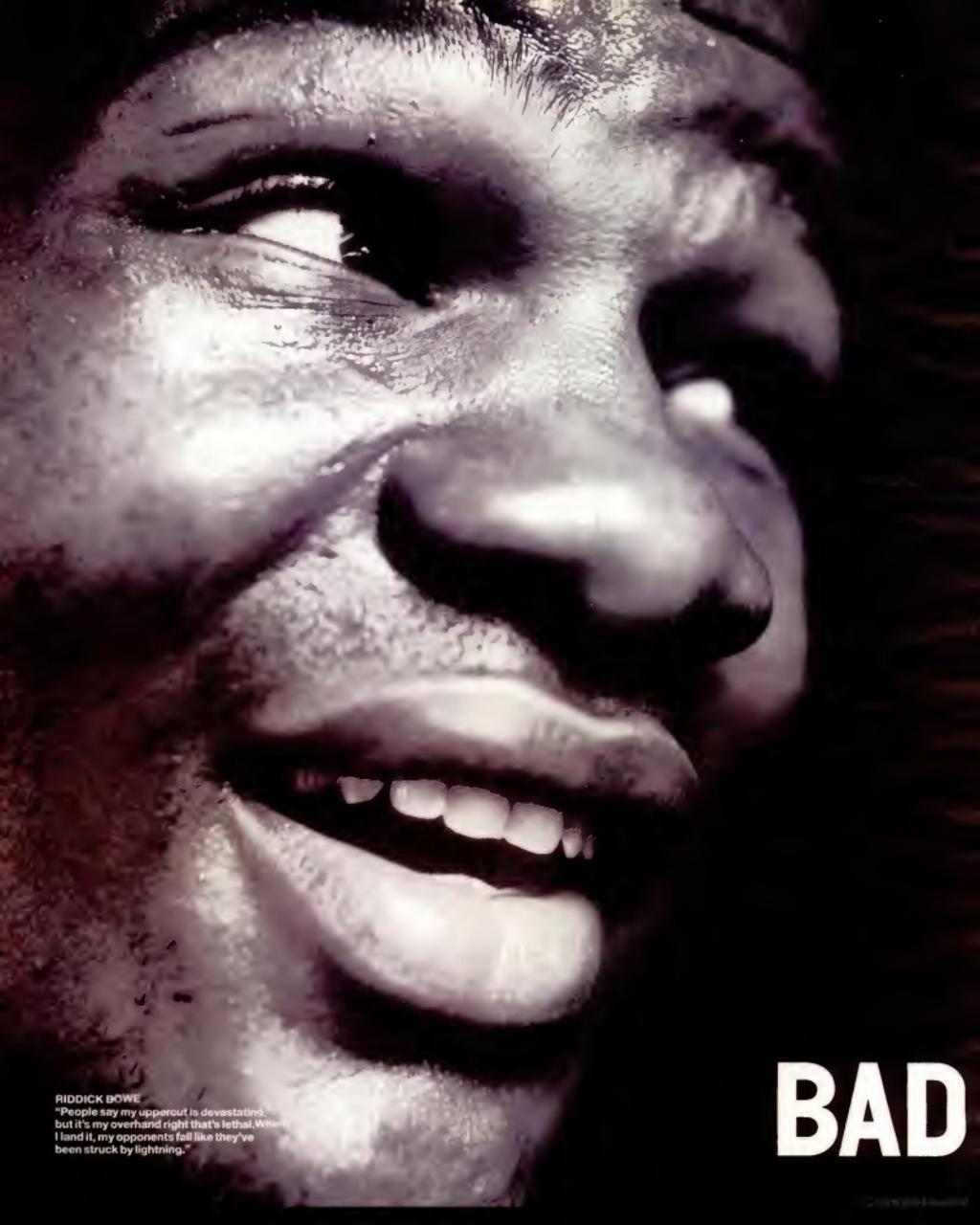
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RIDDICK BOWE

"People say my uppercut is devastating, but it's my overhand right that's lethal. When I land it, my opponents fall like they've been struck by lightning."

BAD

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PRACTITIONERS

OF THE SWEET

SCIENCE

DEMONSTRATE

THAT POWER

IS NOTHING

WITHOUT

CONTROL.

PHOTOGRAPHS

BY BEN WATTS

The magnificence of boxing lies in the diverse methodologies used by its champions to execute a single mission: to dissect an opponent, break his spirit if not his jaw. Before their hands are bound with tape and laced into gloves, successful students of the sweet science must combine strength and speed. And most important, they must have willpower.

Oscar De La Hoya, Roy Jones Jr., Lennox Lewis, and Riddick Bowe share varying amounts of all these attributes, but that's where the similarities end. Heavyweights Lewis and Bowe rely on bad intentions and powerful hitting. De La Hoya abuses opponents with barrages of complex combinations. And Jones, who says his unconventional style is modeled after fighting cocks, is pound-for-pound the most punishing pugilist alive. In their combined careers, the foursome have won two gold and two silver medals, and compiled a combined professional record of 120 and 2. Moreover, they've KO'd 103 opponents and been awarded seven championship belts in five different weight divisions. When they enter the ring, someone's liable to go down. Hard. OJ Lima

LENNOX LEWIS
"The hardest punch I ever threw was against Gary Mason in a fight that everyone expected me to lose. I remember watching his face distort from the force of it."



INTENTIONS



ROY JONES JR.

"If I could put a thought in my opponent's head when I knock him down, it would be, 'I'd better stay on the canvas, because if I get up, I'll get hurt even worse.'"

Mr. Jones



OSCAR DE LA HOYA

"They call me the Golden Boy because I was the only American boxer to win a gold medal in the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona."



**My mom run-
ning her own
consulting firm.
She's been in
business for
over 20 years.
To be a black
woman in a
white man's
world, she's got
a lot of juice.
Grant Hill,
Dream Teamer**

**Louise
Ferrakhian call-
ing upon a mil-
lion black peo-
ple to show up
in Washington
and getting
them to attend.
The behavior of
the people
assembled
there rebutted
all the hateful,
vicious images
that are being
promoted by
the media
against black
people.
Ismail Reed,
suthor**

**Musicians giv-
ing over their
lives to travel
with Sun Ra.
And Don King's
promotions.
He's a powerful
geezier.
Tricky,
audio collageist**

**I was in a car
accident a cou-
ple years ago
where the car
flipped over a
few times, and I
was able to
walk away.
Faith Evans,
torch singer**

Don King Productions, headquarters of Don King's multimillion-dollar boxing empire, is a squat pink building across the road from a gas station in a not-so-chic part of Fort Lauderdale. It's easy to drive past. You'll find no grand DKP sign outside, and no fancy reception area either.

There's not much to look at while you wait: none of the self-congratulatory brochures you might expect, no announcements of upcoming fights or continuous-play videos of past glories, just a few photos of Mike Tyson and King on the walls. It's a stark contrast to the excessive world of a Las Vegas prizefight, where Don King speaks in tongues and holds court, shadowed by immaculately groomed men in sharp suits and fedoras who anticipate his every need. Here at his modest base of operations, when King wants his back scratched, he uses the door like everybody else.

"I've started at subzero. When you say 'ghetto,' I am the ghetto," says King, age 65, dressed in his Sunday casuals—beige slacks and a Cooji jumper. "But I can walk with kings. I've sophisticated myself, so I'm a sophisticated ghettoite. Don't forget I was once the little boy sitting on the stoop in Cleveland, saying, 'That's my car. That's my car,' and now

King got involved in boxing promotion at the age of 40, after being paroled from Ohio's Marion Correctional Institution. During his days as a numbers runner in Cleveland, he'd been convicted of first-degree manslaughter for the fatal beating of an old acquaintance outside a bar. After serving almost four years of a life sentence, he got out of jail in 1971 and began rebuilding his life. His first boxing match was a benefit for a black hospital in Cleveland. King called on an old friend, singer Lloyd Price (of "Stagger Lee" fame), not only to secure Muhammad Ali as the main attraction but also to line up opening performances by Marvin Gaye, Wilson Pickett, Johnny Nash, and Lori Rawls. The first major boxing event promoted by a black man was a huge success. Then in 1973, New York video producer and fight promoter Hank Schwartz was so impressed by King at the Foreman-Frazier fight in Jamaica that he offered him a job. King took the opportunity and ran with it.

King got back in touch with Ali and his manager, Herbert Muhammad, son of Nation of Islam founder Elijah Muhammad. He convinced them to let him promote Ali's bout with the reigning champion, George Foreman. Ali had been offered \$850,000 for another fight

ROPE a DOPE

JUST WHEN HIS CRITICS HAVE HIM DOWN, DON KING COMES OUT SWINGING. BY KIMI ZABIHYAN

I own all those cars." He smiles at the thought without slowing his spiel. "I came out of jail and outplayed my counterparts, who had upward mobility while I had no mobility at all. And outplayed them in their game, because boxing isn't a black game, it's a white game. Blacks are the gladiators in the center of the ring, but they're not in the boardrooms making progressive business deals."

Sitting behind a desk in his simple office—with a bank of closed-circuit security monitors filling one wall—King flips through a stack of papers while talking to a sportswriter for *USA Today* on the speakerphone. The writer is wondering about the possibility of a Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson fight. He inquires, almost apologetically, if King can ask Tyson for a comment. "I'll see what I can do," King replies before hanging up, but it's clear he has no intention of bothering Iron Mike.

"They tore Tyson to pieces when he was in jail, and then they wonder why he won't talk to them," says King of Tyson's reluctance to deal with the media. King sees parallels between himself and Tyson. "We're both victims of our own success. I used to get good press when I first came on the scene, but as I continued to achieve and speak my mind, they went against me."

King has rolled with the punches all his life, but the past two years have brought a pair of devastating blows. In 1992 King's former accountant released information that led to King's indictment for wire fraud in an alleged insurance scam. Then last year, *New York Post* columnist Jack Newfield published *Only in America: The Life and Crimes of Don King*, a biography that grudgingly admits his genius, but ultimately portrays King as an amoral exploiter who is, in the words of one sportswriter quoted in the book, "easiest to imagine as a disease."

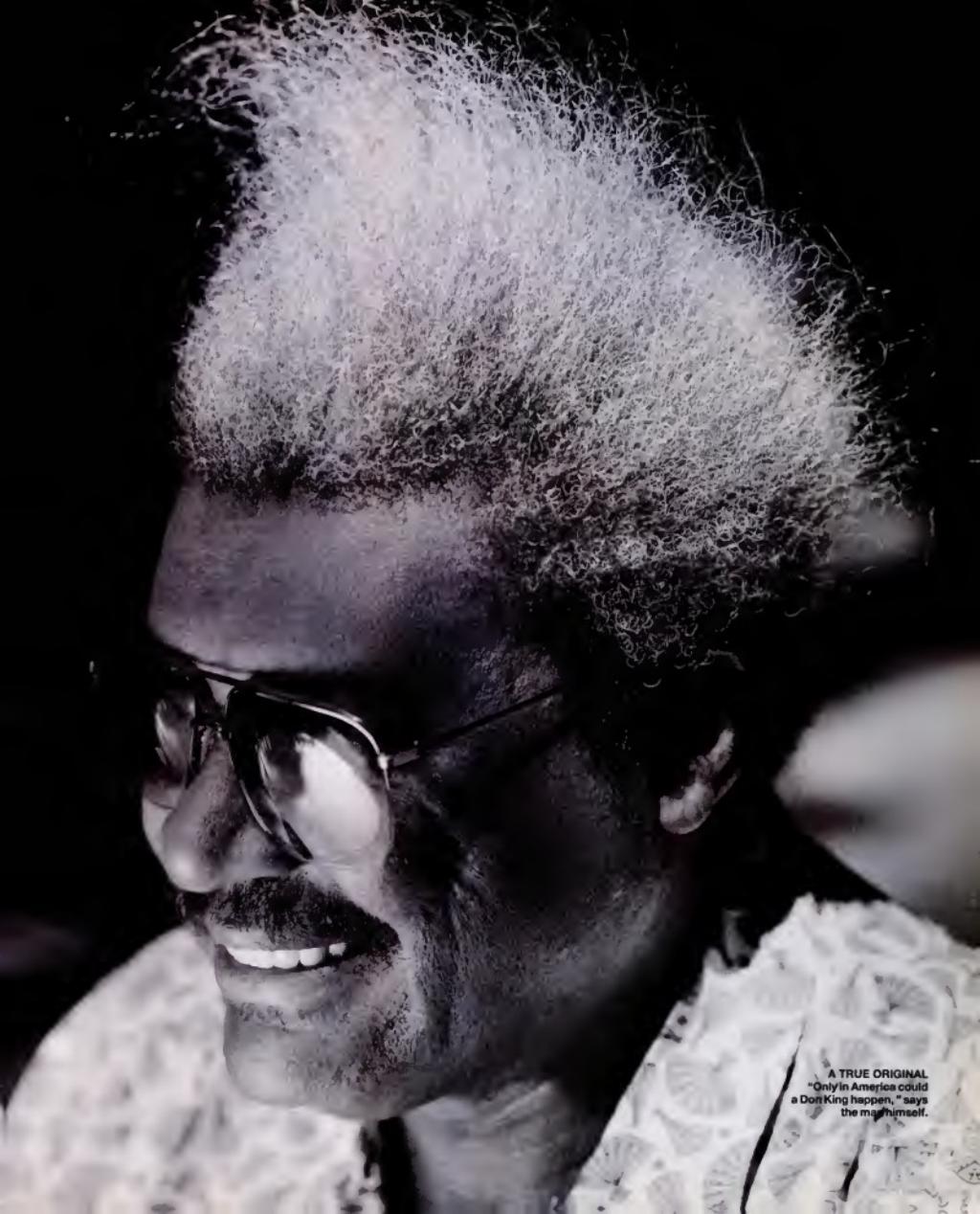
"I'm not a defender and a praver," says King, who faces the very real possibility of prison, depending on the outcome of a trial this fall. "I'm an initiator and producer. Perhaps I should answer my critics, but I just stayed focused and thought that my achievement would speak for itself."

in Madison Square Garden by King's rival, promoter Bob Arum. But King said he could deliver a record-breaking \$5 million apiece to Ali and Foreman. He somehow managed to convince Joseph Mobutu, president of Zaire, to guarantee \$9.6 million of the purse.

Against enormous odds, King pulled off his first championship bout, which is dubbed "the Rumble in the Jungle." It still stands as a boxing milestone. (*When We Were Kings*, a documentary about the event, is due to hit theaters this fall.) Televised worldwide from Kinshasa, Zaire on October 30, 1974, the fight was a global phenomenon and a triumph for the fast-talking outsider. The battered Ali came back to knock out the arm-weary Foreman in the eighth round. But Don King emerged as the key player behind this extraordinary event, almost as compelling a personality as the fighters themselves. "That was the beginning that changed my life," he says now. King's boss, Hank Schwartz, reportedly said, "Pretty soon King will have me riding in the back of the bus." By the following year, sure enough, Schwartz was working for King.

Nonetheless, King has persistently come under attack for alleged underhanded dealings. "Don's specialty is black-on-black crime," said two-time heavyweight champion Tim Witherspoon, whom King paid \$1 million to settle a lawsuit. "I'm black, and he robbed me." Ali also brought suit, claiming King shorthchanged him \$1 million, but dropped the case after receiving a cash payment. More recently, King was accused by his own accountant of spending Tyson's winnings while the former champ was in prison. All the stories of Don King chiseling fighters have earned him more jeers than cheers at his own promotions. King says he loves the hecklers—after all, they pay to get in too. And he insists the charges are false.

"They can say whatever they want, but the fighters were getting slave wages until I came on the scene," says King, in his customary outrageous but irresistible manner. "I revolutionized the pay scale and the sport of boxing," he goes on. "I took the blacks and the Latinos and made sure they got paid. The irony is that they're trying to make me sound like the



A TRUE ORIGINAL
"Only in America could a Don King happen," says the man himself.

robber of the fighters when I was getting the box office for them.

"One fighter was telling me that every time he negotiates, he gets his secretary to call and say, 'Don King on the phone.' And he says, 'Damn, that Don King keeps calling me and offering me all this money.' He always gets a hell of a deal using me as a straight man. They all do it. Even the fights on TV—the fighters wouldn't be there without me. So directly or indirectly, I'm responsible for the economic progress these guys are making."

King claims that he's *never* missed a payroll, for whatever that's worth. "Everyone I've ever done business with I can go back to," he says, "but the propaganda's been contrary to that." He attributes his bad rep to racism. "There's lots of things African-

Americans have contributed to this country that we don't get credit for," he says in a calm voice. "And I'm a living example of that. I've created new records, and yet I've never been recognized by the boxing writers of America. But it doesn't bother me if they don't like me. I say, 'Don't get mad, get smart.' Instead of using the excuse that they're doing this to me because I'm black, we're gonna play court to their rules, and we're gonna excel. I'm fighting an economics war.

"Everything in this country is done under the auspices of whites. The lack of black participation shows you how difficult it is to break down the barriers of economics in this country. I'm a capitalist, but a capitalist of the downtrodden and the underclass. Only in America could a Don King happen; only in America could you come from the bottom rung of the ladder to where I am now. That's why I truly love this country, and that's no stage joke."

King delivers his manifesto in almost one breath. He is masterful at controlling the flow of conversation. More precisely, he doesn't engage in conversation. He's a monologue; it's the same gift of gab that's helped him cut deals with giants from Donald Trump to HBO, from Madison Square Garden to Caesar's Palace—pulling deals out of the fire again and again. He says he's "totally eradicated the word *failure* from my vocabulary."

These days, King says he has two businesses: "the Tyson business" and "the title business." He's assembled a staff of about a dozen that helps him handle all his promotions. It's a mixed group: black, white, Latino, plenty of women and twenty-somethings. "I know my inadequacies, so I surround myself with people who fill in the blanks, whatever their creed or color," says King. "There's no time here for the easygoing. I work hard, and so do those who work for me."

In the past two years, he and his team have negotiated furiously on Mike Tyson's behalf. When Madison Square Garden told him, "Don King needs Madison Square Garden, we don't need you," King took his promotions to Vegas. He says that when Caesar's Palace wouldn't agree to his terms, he went down the road to the MGM Grand and cut a better deal. When Michael Fuchs, then executive vice president of HBO, told King (according to King), "We're the elephants, and we crush flies," King inked a deal with Showtime and set up KingVision, which has televised Tyson's three postponement fights on pay-per-view to audiences in excess of a billion.

"I know my own worth," says King. "When I went to HBO, they didn't even have a budget for boxing." That's what the man says. "At ABC I built a system of fights for them. No one can ride your back if it ain't bent. I ask for crazy numbers, and if you don't give it to me, I go out and get it because I know it's out there. In fact, I'm always surprised because there's usually more out there than I'd thought."

That was certainly the case on August 19, 1995, when Mike Tyson stepped into the ring at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas for the first time since serving three years for rape. Gate receipts for the fight against Peter McNeeley were just under \$14 million, breaking all previous records. The fight itself lasted less than five minutes, but it had plenty of what King likes to call "the magic of excitement."

Some critics have accused King of playing on racial bias. They say he gets the top fighters, from Ali to Tyson, because of his race. "I never got a fighter because I'm black," King says flatly. "Every fighter, including Mike Tyson, came to me after they'd been

EYES ON THE PRIZE
"If we could fulfill our contracts,"
says King, "we'd be on
our way to making Tyson
the first billion-dollar athlete."



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enough ONCE
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DOES IT PROTECT?

Failure Rates, 1 Year	Typical Use ¹	Perfect Use ²
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Douche	18%	6%
Spermicide	21%	6%
Unprotected	83%	

¹ Typical use excludes not using it or not using it correctly.
² Perfect use is when you use the method correctly every time you have sex.

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screwed by the other promoters." Once again, that's what the man says. "Blacks have been so conditioned into a feeling of inferiority that they think a black man can't do what a white man can. We've been set against each other: the kinky hair vs. the curly hair, the light-skinned against the dark-skinned, the people on the hill against the people in the valley. They used to teach that to slave masters: You can control those niggers if you keep them fighting each other. That shit's been working to this day."

Despite these stinging remarks, King says he's proud to have the support of black and white America. But since Mike Tyson may be the most sought-after athlete in the world, King says he expects challenges. "It's like they don't want Tyson and me to get together," says

though he owned all 5,005 rooms. After the weigh-in, he stepped through the deafening *chink chink* of the slot machines, only to be mobbed by a crowd of fans. "Who's that?" a young girl asked. Her father lifted her up and said, "The guy with the hair is Don King."

In his 22 years at the top of a ruthless business, Don King has trodden on some powerful toes. "I suspect there's a lot of people who might want Don King out of the way," he says. "But I don't walk around with a bunch of bodyguards. They can always get you anyway, if they want to."

Don King hasn't bothered to endear himself to the powers that be, but sometimes you can't help but admire his style. When he beat a federal tax evasion

timeless crime," he says. "Lloyd's has never brought a charge against me. This is my own government doing this to me."

He's already stood trial on these charges, but the jury was divided, the judge dismissed the case, and the prosecution objected on a technicality. After 26 months of investigation, 19 witnesses, and millions of dollars spent, the prosecution will be doing it all again this fall. Regardless of the retrial's outcome, the financial toll is heavy. "It's not like I get a public defender," King says. "It's a hard pill to swallow, to pay them to prosecute me and then pay another group of people to defend me." Still, King says he doesn't worry about jail. "If I ever have to go," he explains, "it will take care of itself like it did before."

HIS FINEST HOUR
Kinshasa, Zaire, 1974.
All won back his title at King's
"Rumble in the Jungle."



King, who started working with Tyson in 1988 after crashing the funeral of his former manager, Jimmy Jacobs. "If we could fulfill all our contracts, then we'd be on the road to making Tyson the first billion-dollar athlete. That's why they're bothering me, but I ain't mad at anybody."

There's no denying that when Don King makes a deal, a lot of people get paid. A week before Tyson's WBC championship fight with Frank Bruno last March, all the 90,000-plus hotel rooms in Vegas were sold out at triple their normal rates. The world's media, from Canada to Indonesia, flew in to cover the spectacle and request a Mike Tyson interview. King hired a press man, who admitted, "I get paid to say no to everybody in different languages." (Bruno was willing to talk, and spoke highly of King: "They fed me all the horror stories," he said. "They made him out to be worse than Jack the Ripper. It's all bollocks, poison spread by jealous people who cannot compete with this boxing giant. I love Don King.")

King walked around the cavernous MGM Hotel casino grinning his famous grin and greeting people as

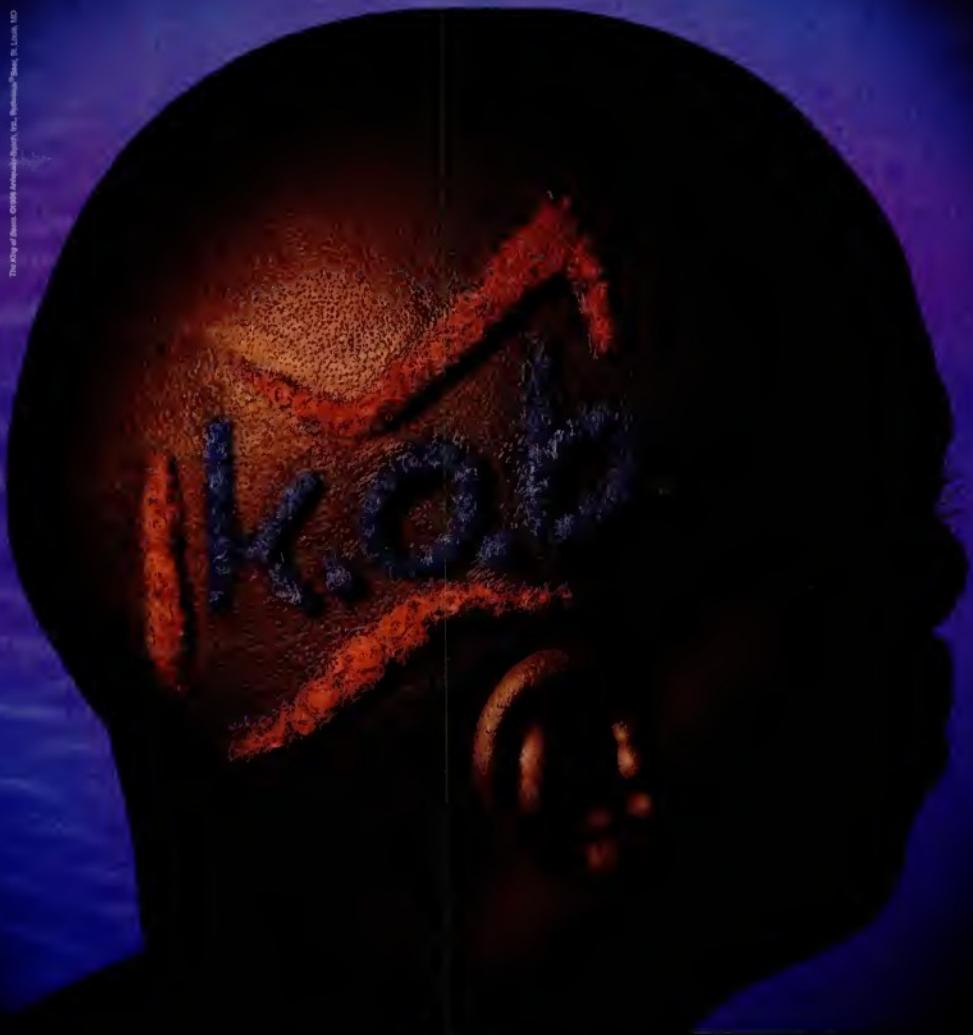
charge in 1985, King thanked the jury by flying them first-class to sit ringside at numerous heavyweight bouts. By this time, he's used to handling adversity, but he says the waiting is the worst part.

"The interim is excruciatingly painful," says King. "That's the time between the allegation and the exonerated. It's a very dangerous time, a time when you can be destroyed. And I'm in the interim now. I've survived three scandals; most people cannot even survive one, because the media says you're guilty until proven innocent. They go deep into your history and dichotomize everything you've done."

King is currently under indictment for wire fraud. At the center of the case is Joe Maffia, King's former accountant, who told federal investigators that King filed an insurance claim with Lloyd's of London for lost training expenses after a canceled fight and then shortchanged the fighter, Julio Cesar Chavez. The sum involved is \$350,000, and the evidence is contained in nine faxes. If the feds prove that King personally knew how much came in and went out, that constitutes deliberate fraud and King faces prison time. "This is a vic-

Meanwhile, he keeps on planning Mike Tyson's road to reunifying the heavyweight championship: The next opponent is WBA champ Bruce Seldon, another King-promoted fighter. "We've put on 47 world championships while I was under indictment," he says. "Think how much upward mobility I'd have without that. But you can't feel sorry for yourself. In the evening of my career, they cannot take anything away from me. It's a crowning achievement to take part in the game. And the game is not for those on the sidelines but those who get into the center of the ring, who sweat and toil and achieve in spite of the insurmountable obstacles. They blame my success on my hair, or my loquaciousness, the face card, anything—but they never give you credit as a man."

Then King pauses, growing almost pensive. "There's a lot of things you want to say, but you'd just be giving them credibility. For every accusation thrown at me, I've been vindicated, and they just print a little thing in the back of the paper. But while it's going on, every day it's big headlines. If you want to hear about all the good things that I've done, wait until I'm dead." □



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POWER MOVES

► Fashion legend **GIANNI VERSACE** is representing: from a form-fitting metal sheath on Vanessa Williams singing "Colors of the Wind" at the Academy Awards to his bride, Mayte, chillin' behind gold-armed shades courtside at a Knicks game. In the get-money '90s, Versace is the flavor. The 50-year-old Italian-based designer—along with his sister/muse, Donatella—has become the entertainment style guru, dressing Tina Turner, Patti LaBelle, Madonna, Elton John, Iman, Ice-T, and on and on. And let's not forget the Notorious B.I.G., who gives constant shout-outs on "One More Chance": "I'm clockin' ya / Versace shades watchin' ya." Need we say more? *Emil Wilbeikin*



► SRINJA SRI-NIVASAN is the Ontological Yahoo!—that's her title—at Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com), the unofficial card catalog of the World Wide Web. "My role," says the 24-year-old Stanford graduate, "is to be in charge of the overall organization scheme—how we categorize sites."

Talk about a huge task. The Web contained an estimated 300 gigabytes of information at press time, and it doubles in size every 53 days. An estimated 6 million people a month use Yahoo! to find the Legos Web sites, the Sammy Davis Jr. home page, and any of the other 250,000 sites the California-based search engine lists. "The Web is growing at such an exponential rate, an issue we face is to make sure we've always got the best sites," says Srinivasan (who spends her downtime cruising the CIA World Factbook). With Srinja, the Ultimate Web Surf Ninja, at the helm, that should not be a problem.

Harry Allen



◀ "We're starting a positive movement," says producer/writer Rico Wade, one-third of the Atlanta-based hitmakers **ORGANIZED NOIZE**, three brothers changing the face of black music. After scoring platinum success with OutKast in 1994, Organized Noize—Rico, Patrick Brown, and Ray Murray—landed a production deal with LaFace and started their own label, Red Clay. But they're not your everyday hip hop producers. Organized—who own all their master tapes—not only produced TLC's multiplatinum, award-winning "Waterfalls," but have also worked with Curtis Mayfield and George Clinton, and plan to collaborate soon with (believe it or not) Chicago! As Rico puts it, "We can't just do rap. We're way more creative than that."

Shani Saxon

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BIG WILLIE STYLE

Hip hop's reverence for all things gangster has finally created the ultimate mack of the '90s: the Big Willie. Willie is supposed to be the strong, silent type who, as Teddy Roosevelt once said, "speaks softly and carries a big stick." He's an old-school romantic, possessing the sex appeal of a Marvin Gaye, Sam Cooke, or Donny Hathaway. Willie is also a savvy businessman with an ear for successful sounds—much like his forefathers Quincy Jones, Berry Gordy, and Ahmet Ertegun.

Willie is a freethinker, fluent with modern technology. His office—like that of entertainment impresario Russell Simmons—exists wherever a cell-phone transmission can go through. And Willie is not afraid of taking chances and creating trends. He is fearless, vigilant, and innovative in his approach to business.

The Big Willie of 1996 is most definitely Wu-Tang Clan's Method Man. He is becoming what he once aspired to be: "the mack in the back." He keeps it real and still goes home with a Grammy ("You're All I Need to Get By"), a No. 1 pop hit, and a Coke commercial. And as Meth rhymes on GZA's "Shadow Boxing," "I hold my own! Word up!

Emil Wilbekin

READY FOR ACTION

Meth is Method Man, like a true Big Willie. White shirt and black leather coat by Prada; silver-and-black sunglasses by Gucci; gold and steel Tank Francaise watch by Cartier; silver jewelry by Robert Lee Morris; do-rag Meth's own; StarTAC cellular phone by Motorola.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KAZAKI KIRIYA



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ICE-T AND CHUCK D RAP ABOUT LIFE IN THE HIP HOP TRENCHES. BY DANYEL SMITH



VIBE: Let's talk about juice. When people hear the word, they usually think of big-selling artists like Babyface, Whitney Houston....

Ice-T: It's simulated. We think we got juice in the music industry, but in reality we have none. Michael Jordan don't own the team, and Oprah don't own the network. We simulate it. When you get to the real blue blood of what America is, ain't nobody near black up there with the Rockefellers and the people with real juice.

Chuck D: Those with real juice look at the world like it's supposed to be looked at—a place full of water and land. [Laughter] They ain't looking at borders. There's motherfuckers out there that just can't be zoned. People try to measure power and juice by a verse, or a fucking hit record, or a fucking triple double, or playoff victory. That shit is what you call bread and circuses.

Ice-T: There are kids who walk up to me saying, "Ice, you the Man, you can make my life." And I'm, like, "Dude, do you know how small I am?" When I was going through that Time Warner shit, [former Warner

Stetsasonic and EPMD, we asked Ice to come along with it, we asked the Geto Boys, we put Too Short down, MC Hammer. We had this big crew of different MCs from different parts of the country basically saying, "Yo, man, look, we just happy, we out here playin'. We playin' together, it's about the public. It's about servin' 'em." That's how that East-West shit was knocked down real quick.

Ice-T: I think there's drama now for two reasons. One, Cube and them just got an attitude. I don't know what they're tryin' to do. They're, like, "Come on, we've been kissin' New York's ass for a long time and yet people are still givin' up the love that we give them when they come out here." Then there's the real beef. Tupac got real beef with Biggie. I just did a show with Tupac last night, [Fox's] *Saturday Night Live*. I told them niggas, I told them straight up, "I'm not with that East Coast-West Coast shit. I got too much love in New York. Fuck that."

VIBE: And what did they say to that?

Ice-T: Well, Tupac really believes Biggie and them shot him. I don't

STAYING POWER

Bros. chairman] Mo Ostin and I were sitting at a 20-seat boardroom table. He said, "Ice, you're part of Time Warner's record division. Let me explain the record division." He took a quarter out of his pocket, flipped it onto the table and said, "This table is Time Warner. That quarter is the record division." In other words, he was saying, I'm the boss of this quarter, but look how big the company is. You're like an insect on that quarter.

Chuck D: Ice took it as far as anybody could take it. I told him plenty of times, "Yo, Ice, I was jealous, man." That motherfucker had the Fraternal Order of Police and the president actually making comments.

VIBE: Isn't that some kind of juice?

Ice-T: The kind that will get you killed.

VIBE: You guys have been in hip hop for a long while. Do you still like it?

Chuck D: Of course.

Ice-T: Yeah. Hell, yeah.

VIBE: What's right with it and what's wrong with it?

Chuck D: What's happening now is that this is the only business where you can raise your hand and get in it. And that's bullshit. To be a rapper, you gotta go through rituals. And to be a recording artist, you gotta go through trials and tribulations. It needs to be administered, organized, and disciplined from the top by people who [really understand it].

Ice-T: I love the fact that hip hop's still here. And the hope that it puts in kids' hearts. When I first came out, there was less than 20 groups, maybe 10 groups. Right now, everybody can rap. The UPS man came to my house—the UPS guy—and the nigga could flow! I'm talking about really rap. The cable dude came in my house to hook up the TV. Nigga could rap. Everybody can get in this business now. It's off the hook.

VIBE: How do you feel about this East Coast-West Coast thing? And tell me what it was like five or six years ago.

Chuck D: Back in '88 when we did the Bring the Noise tour with

know, I wasn't there. But if somebody thinks somebody shot them, it's on life.

Chuck D: No question.

Ice-T: I don't know what to say about that, but that beef they got, that's real, that's not East Coast-West Coast shit.

Chuck D: That's between those two camps right there.

VIBE: Why is it happening? Isn't part of it about straight competition to sell records?

Ice-T: Here's a good example. I was on the radio the other night, and they was asking me, "Well, why can't brothers get along, why can't y'all just be down with each other?" And I was on 92 the Beat. I said, "Why can't you man 106 on this station?" Why can't VIBE talk positively about *The Source*? Because it's competition. Right now rap is business, millions of dollars are exchanging hands.

Chuck D: It's business, but you gotta at least tell motherfuckers, "Don't be backing up onto the Tee," you know what I'm saying? We have to remember that this is the shit that made us. We need to take care of it.

Ice-T: When I started rhyming, I really didn't take it seriously. As I started coming up, I'm, like, "Wow, people really pay attention to what I'm saying," you know? I didn't realize this was about power.

VIBE: So do y'all think you have more juice than 10 years ago?

Ice-T: I think I got love. I think the people that see me make my moves, they got love for me. They see me and Chuck go through battles, they know we stayed down, 'cause like Chuck told me, "Anybody can take a position, but it takes a soldier to hold a position."

Chuck D: That's right. We get our ass kicked every day, and if that means juice, that you get your ass kicked and you still standin', maybe that's some black juice.

Ice-T: But if we're looked upon as having major juice, then it's a sad day. A sad day.

Chuck D: Exactly. □

Nelson
Mandela
spending 27
years in a South
African jail
fighting for the
right to vote in a
nonracial
democratic
society.
Jesse L.
Jackson Jr.,
Illinois
congressman/
his son



Standing
over the hills
in Beirut and
watching Israeli
air forces
unleash an
artillery and
air raid bombing
attack. It was a
bright, sunny
afternoon, but
by the time it
was over the
city had dis-
appeared in the
fog of war.
Geraldo
Rivera,
cable guy

God making
me a successful
artist with good
morals and
values.
Monica, teen
songstress



POWER MOVES

► In describing his alter ego, the aloof and intense Detective Frank Pembleton on NBC's *Homicide*, actor ANDRE BRAUGHER also describes himself: "He doesn't pander to the affections of the audience. He just closes cases." In following his character's credo of simplicity, Braugher doesn't even have a publicist. "I don't need to be genuflected to," he explains. "When you get somebody who's paid \$2,000 or \$3,000 a month to hype you, what you have is someone whose entire existence is predicated on kissing your ass."

The Chicago native's lack of interest in premieres, fame, or glitz allows him to live far outside La-La Land in a modest Baltimore neighborhood with his wife and son. Braugher is mostly interested in distilling the power that comes with mastery of his craft. "I'm just fascinated with getting to the bottom of this acting thing," he says.

Kristal Brent Zook

► Today's exaggerated female R&B singaz leave you starving for just one real riff. Listen to the mimics doing half-baked versions of her material—Whitney's "I'm Every Woman," Mary J.'s "Sweet Thing." And then experience the free-falling beauty that results when freckle-faced CHAKA KHAN sets a song free. There's no comparison. Her version of "My Funny Valentine" on the *Waiting to Exhale* soundtrack blew all hers to the throne away. She's a jazz life force, taking you from body-crouched-to-the-earth lows to star-explosions-in-unknown-galaxy highs, intensely weaving pop, funk, and R&B. This 43-year-old grandmother's body of work proves beyond question the irresistible power of the voice. Omoronke Idowu



► Hip hop, as understood by playwright AUGUST WILSON, "is the spiritual fist of African-American culture." Reassuring to know that a 51-year-old Pulitzer and Tony winner is feeling it—but unsurprising, Wilson is dedicated to the Roots-ish task of exploring the 20th century black experience—decade by beatific, foreboding decade. With blues as their bedrock, his seven plays (including *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Piano Lesson*, and his latest, *Seven Guitars*) chronicle the struggle for black self-determination. But it's his play-in-progress, set in 1984, that has him stumped. "I'm trying to understand that generation," he explains, "particularly the suicidal strategies." Wilson sighs. "I must look into the past." Karen R. Good

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who fell off

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who blew up

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SAXOPHONIST JAMES CARTER
ACTOR VING RHAMES
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MODEL GEORGINA
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NETNIGHT WEB SITE

COMEBAKES

EN VOGUE
TRACY CHAPMAN
NEW EDITION
LIONEL RICHIE
DOC GOODIN
THE ISLEY BROTHERS



AL GREEN
LL COOL J (BUT DONT CALL IT A...)
GETO BOYS
PHYLISSA RASHAD AND THE COS

2 LIVE CREW
LUCKY CHARMZ
RAPERS
WEAVES
FRIENDS
KEEPIN' IT REAL
DAVE JUSTICE
LITTLE KIM
F. LEE BAILEY
THE BUTTERFLY
GAY BASHING
RANDALL CUNNINGHAM
MARGE SCHOTT

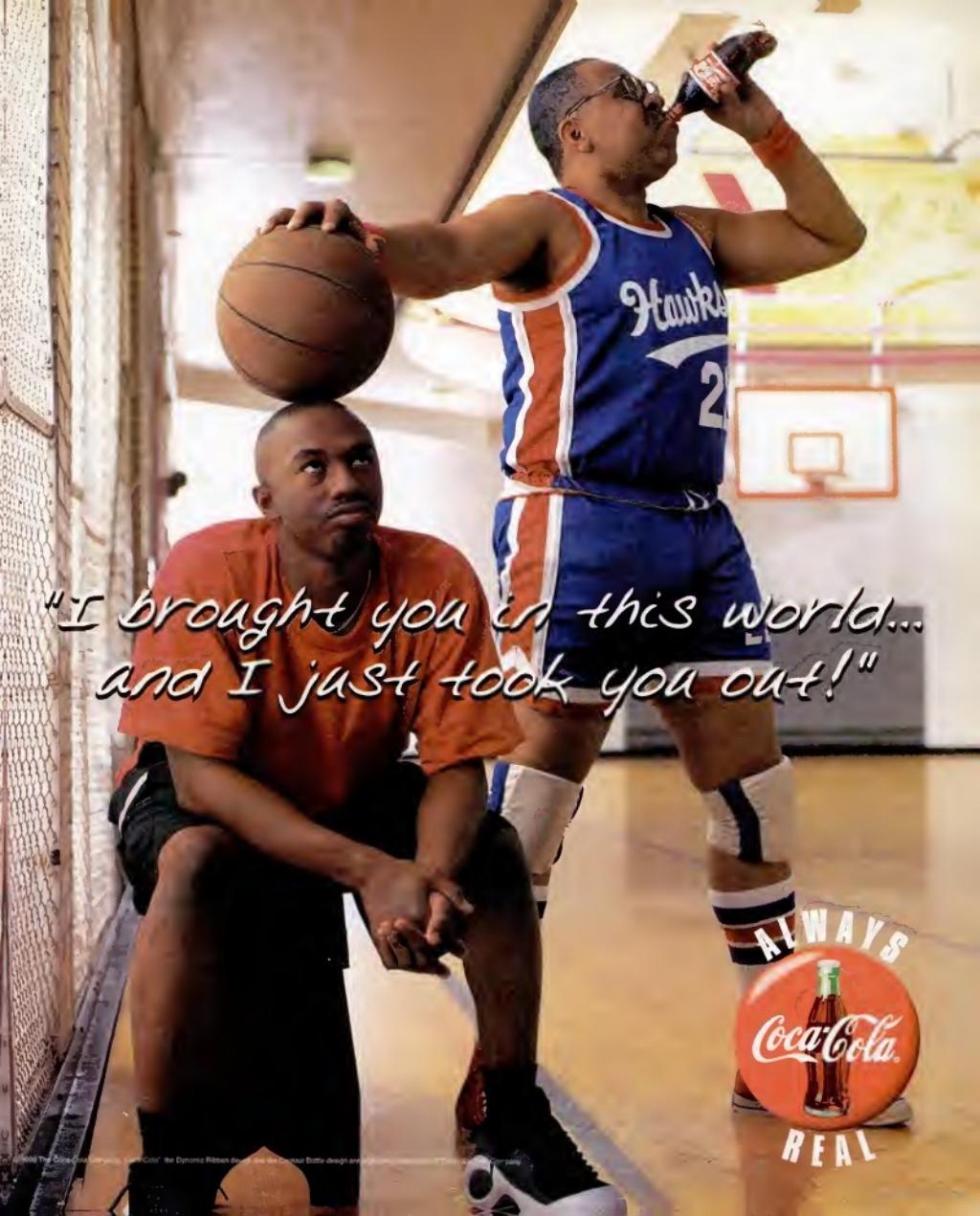
LUTHER CAMPBELL
COUNT CHOCULA
MCs
AFROS, CORNROWS, BALDIES...
MOESHA
KEEPIN' IT RIGHT
HALLE BERRY
FOXY BROWN
CHRIS DARDEN
THE BANKHEAD BOUNCE
GAY LOVE SCENES
STEVE MCNAIR
ISIAH THOMAS



LONG BEACH RAP
VERONICA WEBB
SEGA
PUFFY IN VIDEOS
HERBAL ECSTASY
UPTOWN ENTERTAINMENT
SEAQUEST DSV
MECCA USA
ONYX
CHRIS WEBBER
SHOUT-OUTS ON RECORDS
CLUB KINGPIN PETER GATIEN
THE HOT 97 MORNING SHOW WITH
ED LOVER, DOCTOR DRE, & LISA G.
BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD
DETAILS

CHICAGO RAP
TYRA BANKS
PLAYSTATION
DABRAT IN VIDEOS
HERBAL TEA
UNIVERSAL RECORDS
THE X-FILES
FILA
FREDRO THE MOVIE STARR
JUWAN HOWARD
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VIBE PARTY QUEEN KARLA RADFORD
THE ASHFORD & SIMPSON SHOW

"LITTLE PENNY" HARDAWAY
ECOTRIP



"I brought you in this world...
and I just took you out!"



TODD



JEANS



AMERICAN RAG AERO WHITE STAR CLOTHING TRASH & VAUDÉVILE





Are the Almighty Latin Kings Nation a ferocious cultlike street gang or, as they claim, a beacon of hope in despair? Or both? The truth may be revealed when Supreme Crown King Blondie, the group's messianic leader, stands trial for drug trafficking, racketeering, and murder. *Laura Gómez reports*

ANATOMY OF A KING

Early morning at Manhattan's Metropolitan Correctional Center. Inside the complex of cells and corridors, steel-and-glass doors click open and slam shut on command. Luis Felipe, a.k.a. King Blood, deposed leader of the Almighty Latin Kings and Queens Nation, enters an antiseptic visitors' lounge with shoulders swinging. The stocky 34-year-old *cubano* sports tangerine prison garb with his number, 14067-074, printed across his heart. His hair is cropped tight with a fade; he wears a mustache and carries a slight paunch. Tattooed across the knuckles of one hand are letters that represent the five points on the Latin Kings' Crown: love, respect, sacrifice, honor, and obedience. On his arm is the word GODFATHER.

"Wassup?" he says, smiling as he takes a seat. Then the founder of the organization now known as the Latin Kings closes his eyes in a gesture of fatigue. "I've been in segregation for 38 months in the box." King Blood finally grunts, in Spanish so the man with the walkie-talkie can't understand. "Before this, I was in Attica for 14 months." He pauses to look at his hands. "They say I have a lot of power with the Latino community and that I'm very dangerous."

King Blood has been separated from other prison inmates for more than three years. He spends 23 hours a day in an unlit cell, takes his meals through a hole in the door, and has an hour to play basketball alone on the roof. All his visitors, including this reporter, are photographed. His mail, sometimes 40 or 50 letters a day, is intercepted by federal investigators building a case against him. He receives only Xeroxes of letters and family photos (standard procedure, according to the DA, when dealing with prisoners deemed "a threat"). "Stop treating my client like Charles Manson," said his

court-appointed attorney, Lawrence Feitell, at a recent hearing.

King Blood reckons he's spent a third of his life behind bars, and prison has been the setting for most of the critical moments of his life. In 1986, at Collins Correctional Facility in upstate New York, while doing time for fatally shooting his 18-year-old girlfriend in the head, he founded the first New York chapter of the Latin Kings and set forth the principles that would come to govern the entire Latin Kings Nation. "The Five Percenters, a black prison gang, began abusing my Latino brothers and robbing them for their jewelry and sneakers," he says. "So we finally unified ourselves so nobody would fuck with us."



Luis Felipe, a.k.a. King Blood

Felipe first encountered the Latin Kings in Chicago, where the jailhouse fraternity originated in the 1940s to defend the rights of Latino prisoners by any means necessary. That group dissolved, resurfacing here and there in various forms, including a street gang that Felipe joined in Chi-Town when he was "real young." But in 1986, a new era began when Felipe emerged as King Blood, the Latin Kings' master scribe, penning a 42-page manifesto setting forth the history and goals of the nation.

"I started seeing a lot of Spanish guys in jail," he explains, "and when they were released, they didn't have any hope on the streets." King Blood says he realized that a strong mind and a unified

organization had more power than drugs or guns. He declared the Latin Kings a cultural organization bent on educating youth about their heritage and changing the fate of their people. Members were initiated in solemn ceremonies and attended weekly meetings in the prison yard. They wore black and gold beads with a crucifix, and used lightning-speed handshakes and code words, always chanting their

mantra: "*amor de rey, amor de rey*"—King love, King love.

In the 10 years since he codified that vision, membership has expanded to a number of states, including Illinois, Wisconsin, Florida, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. By their own accounting, there are more than 3,000 Latin Kings at Rikers Island Prison alone, with another 4,000 on the streets of New York, not to mention the Latin Queens and the youth corps, the Pee-Wee Kings. King Blood's power extends far and wide.

"When you are born, you're born into darkness," says King Blood of the black and gold beads. "And the gold is when you come into the light, when you are blessed as a King." Upon entry to the Latin Kings, members take a name of their own choosing, preceded by the honorific "King." Leaders are called "Supreme Crowns." Others carry titles such as "Prince," "War-

utilizes the federal RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) Act, which is often used to indict street gangs. This occurred mainly because of more than 20,000 pages of letters allegedly written by King Blood and other Latin Kings and Queens, all of which are now in the hands of the U.S. Attorney. Besides laying out the details of the group's structure and membership, its treaties and its enemies, the letters outline specific crimes—beatings, witness intimidation, and murder—that actually took place. The letters create a paper trail unprecedented in crime history. According to prosecutors, no criminal has ever been so stupid as to document his crimes in such detail.

"My brother, what I am about to write is only for your eyes," begins one of the letters introduced into evidence. Many of the handwritten letters are deco-

When King Blood chiseled out the Latin Kings' 11 commandments (stressing loyalty and secrecy while forbidding drug use, lustng after other Kings' women, and homosexuality), he made it clear that compliance would be strictly enforced. According to correspondence seized by federal prosecutors, the punishment was severe in the extreme: Breaking the rules could result in a BOS (beating on sight) or TOS (termination on sight).

"The government made up these things," King Blood says. "For all I know, TOS means 'tons of shit,'" he adds with a laugh. "Nowhere in our bylaws do we talk about TOS or BOS. They created all this negative publicity to make a big case. All this negativity is easy to advertise," he says. "The government doesn't want me to get out of prison because they



Latin Kings throwing hand signs during Puerto Rican Day parade on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue

According to seized Latin Kings correspondence, breaking any of the Kings' 11 co

lord," "Treasurer," and "Crowd Adviser." It's said that once you are a King, you are a King for life.

In June 1994, U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White handed down an 80-count indictment charging King Blood and 28 of his associates with crimes ranging from racketeering and drug trafficking to eight murders—including those of seven Kings—all during a six-month period. White labeled the Latin Kings a rigid hierarchical organization that beheaded, burned, or beat wayward members, and maimed and killed outsiders. While admitting that the stated goals of the organization were "very worthy," she said that "we don't see evidence of any of the positive projects they talk about in their literature." White's case against the Latin Kings

rated with intricate designs and illustrations. King Blood allegedly signed his correspondence "First Supreme Crown Inka of New York State and Sunrise of the Lion Tribe." The following correspondence, from King Blood to another indicted leader, King Blaze, was dated April 11, 1994: "...About Lil Man...I believe that he deserve to be *muerde* but I don't want...King Tutie to take this mission, he's the first crown, and he's doing a great job, so have the Security team to take care of this." In September 1993, King Lil Man, whose real name was William Cartegena, was found decapitated in a bathtub at 1392 Boston Road in the Bronx. His hands had been cut off. A tattoo had been cut out of his arm, and his entire body was burned. His head and hands were never found.

know how many people admire and follow me."

King Blood denies any wrongdoing, except on the part of the feds. "I didn't order the killings," he says. "The government just sat back and let those people get killed. If someone wrote me a letter saying, 'Hey, bro, this guy messed up, we think he's supposed to get killed,' and the government got the letter, they are supposed to go and arrest this person for conspiracy to commit murder. So why are they going to copy the letter, give it to me, and wait for me to respond back?" He glances at the clock, watching the minutes tick away. "Man, this is a conspiracy."

Feitell, King Blood's attorney, calls the charges against his client "grandiose and sensationalized." Though prosecutors insist that many of the letters are

from Blood, Feitell says there is some doubt as to whether his client ever signed the correspondence in question. Part of the defense seems to be that the whole situation is crazy. "If you were a Hollywood scriptwriter," he says, "this would be the type of script you would write."

In another twist worthy of the silver screen, King Blood was targeted for assassination by several of his own chief officers after the federal indictments came down. "Everyone in this case feels betrayed," Queen Zulma, one of the alleged letter writers, told *New York Newsday*. "The letters were written by a man obsessed with his own power." Zulma says Blood insisted that all official business be meticulously documented. "Only he knows why he wrote those letters. And his pen destroyed him."

1973 at the age of 11 to learn the art of gangbangbang. One morning in 1979, he was making his way home when he felt the cold barrel of a gun behind his ear. He escaped, ran behind a car, pulled out a .38 revolver, and fired several shots. "I shot the guy in the arm," he says. "But before I had a chance to run away from *la policia*, they arrested me and charged me with attempted homicide. I got 10 years."

By the next year, Cuba seemed overtaken with lawlessness and desperation. That's when Castro opened his prison cells and freed the "undesirables." King Blood became one of the lucky ones, setting off across the Straits of Florida in a rickety boat made of inner tubes and old furniture. More than 100 refugees traveled together in a ragtag flotilla, their fate in nature's indifferent hands. He remembers seeing a fin cutting

people. I have been shot and stabbed myself."

But today, he insists, he's a changed man. And though he and the Latin Kings stand accused of serious crimes, he dismisses all wrongdoers as impostors "using the power of the organization to get their own." He says he receives letters every day from mothers thanking him for helping turn their kids' lives around. He points to success stories like King Tony (Antonio Fernandez). Now one of the top five Latin Kings in the New York area, Tony serves as Supreme Crown of the Tiger Tribe in Brooklyn. "King Tony used to be a crack addict," King Blood says with obvious pride. "He was in and out of programs. He'd come out of jail and he started smoking crack again. We'd tell him, 'If you keep this up, we're going to throw you out of the family.' Now he's crazy clean."

Spreading King love in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn



handments could result in a BOS (beating on sight) or TOS (termination on sight).

It's been more than a decade since King Blood vanished from the Universals, the large nocturnal gatherings of Kings that once roared when he spoke. Though his followers seem to regard King Blood as a kind of messiah, very few know his background. Before he realized the power of mobilizing masses, Felipe spent much of his life profoundly alone.

Luis Felipe grew up on the streets of Maria de Jesus, one of Havana's poorest slums. He never knew his father, and his mother was a prostitute. "I guess it was the only way she could make her money," he says, his voice cracking at the memory. He remembers Castro's Cuba with bitter resentment: Abject poverty and hopelessness were the symptoms of a revolution on its last legs. The way he tells it, he dropped out of school in

through the water just before the raft next to him was rammed, throwing an old man overboard. The sharks ripped him apart, filling the water with magenta clouds. "I felt like a prisoner of the sea," says King Blood. Six years later, he wrote in the Latin Kings' manifesto, "You don't even know if you will survive the present night. But the biggest risk of all is living and dying, and as a King this is our eternal companion."

Felipe landed in Miami two days later, traveled to Key West, then to Puerto Rico, and eventually wound up in Chicago. There he reappalled his street skills, dealing cocaine and heroin and developing a reputation for ruthlessness. At age 14, he joined a renegade faction called the Pee-Wee Kings. "I was about gangbangbang then," he says. "I shot people, I killed

Pop pop pop. Distant gunfire speaks of bargains gone bad as 29-year-old King Tony walks down a long, narrow street somewhere in Brooklyn. He sees the usual ghostly figures haunting the dimly lit park up ahead. The night air grows still as Tony steps in their face.

"I just come here to bother y'all about selling your drugs on this corner," Tony roars, pointing his index finger at the group of sidewalk salesmen. There's no need to front out here; nine years ago Tony was putting in long hours slanging crack with one of East New York's most notorious gangs, the Homicides. "I always be tellin' y'all to leave that shit alone," he says now. "You should become Kings."

"We just surviving," mumbles one of the young dealers.

→

"This is the only way we could do it," offers another. "There's no jobs out there."

King Tony laughs mirthlessly. He knows what it is to face one's own demons. "You liars," he taunts. "When's the last time you looked for a job?"

"What you think I would rather do? Get \$5 an hour or get paid lovely?" the first dealer replies. "Ain't nobody getting killed. And doing time in jail is like doing time in the streets. The only thing, there's no pussy."

"Let's be real," says Tony, warming to his sermon. "You think jail is easy? Wait until you find your ass spread out 'cause y'all niggas didn't listen." Now he's got their attention. "The Latin King Nation did change me," he says, his voice ringing with conviction that doesn't sound like it's only meant to impress a reporter. "Now I stand for a cause—to change people like you who give us a bad rep. I've got hundreds too," Tony continues, digging in his pockets. "And I don't deal drugs."

King Tony used to rob crack dealers for their cash and their stash. He craved the snap-crackle-pop of cocaine rocks. His apartment usually smelled of stale smoke, passed gas, spilled beer, and the dog. An empty fish tank sat on a wooden crate near the sofa. Inside were bundles of vials, small bags of heroin, and a 9 mm semiautomatic. That, he says, was before he became a King.

When Tony got his first pair of jailhouse greens after being arrested with cocaine and a gun, a guard explained the rules of prison: "Shut up," "Sit down," and "Your life is ours, son." Sitting next to him was a clean-cut Puerto Rican youth sporting black and gold beads. "Don't worry, kid," he told Tony. "I'm a Latin King. We run righteous here. We got respect. We don't fuck with no one and no one fucks with us. We about preserving Latin brothers. You should become a King." Tony had his first glimmer of hope. He'd found a sort of family.

By the time he was released two years later, he'd risen to the level of Supreme Crown. Most days he was at work at 7 a.m. in the mailroom of an advertising agency. At night, he spent his time chasing down drug dealers and trying to bring them into the family. "It used to be about territory," he says. "Back then we had to prove to everybody that Latinos were bad. That's the difference between the Latin Kings and a gang. The Homicides didn't know what it was to go to school and learn. It was, Get high and get ready to murder someone. I know people that died for corners," he says, growing heated. "And nothing changes. Your brother falls and all that's left is a bloodstain. It's gotta stop. That's what my cause is."

King Tony's devotion to that cause has not wavered, despite the charges leveled at King Blood and his inner circle. He remains loyal, regarding the other suspects as "two-headed Kings," corrupt leaders abusing their positions to line their pockets. He refuses to believe that they took orders from Blood and resent that they're trying to take him down with them. But these days he has trouble of his own.

Last summer, while coming out of a Universal meeting in a Bronx schoolyard, Tony was pulled aside and searched by police investigating a tip about "Latin



The Latin Kings' five-pointed crown

Kings with guns." They found a small amount of marijuana, which Tony insists they planted on him. They took him to the station house, frisked him again, and this time found a .38 snub-nose. Tony did eight and a half months at Rikers, lost his job at the ad agency, and still faces 10 years on federal gun charges. But his attorney, the ponytailed Ron Kubay—defender of the down-trodden and law partner of the late William Kunstler—believes Tony can get off on an illegal-search defense. In the meantime, King Tony maintains his struggle. Last April, at a rally for racial justice, he stood across the street from City Hall and spoke against police brutality. "The Latin Kings are about learning your people and your heritage," he says with the fervor of the converted. "Learn who Don Pedro Albizu Campos was. Learn how he fought for the people of Puerto Rico. Learn to be proud of who you are. Help your Latin brother; don't kill him. If he's got a gun, take it from him. If he's stupid, make him smart." He waves his arms and says it one more time. "The Latin Kings are not a gang."

In December 1994, the Latin Kings joined forces with the Five Percenters and the Neta Association, a Dominican jailhouse brotherhood, to organize a hunger and work strike to protest corruption and poor conditions at Rikers Island. They talk about becoming a tax-exempt corporation, about purchasing abandoned buildings and setting up leadership training courses. "We are far more sophisticated than the media and law

enforcement officials paint us," says King Oreo, an ex-stickup kid who transformed himself into a backslapping Democratic pol. Oreo served as point man for a contingent of Latin Kings supporting Nelson Antonio Denis's 1994 campaign for state assembly in East Harlem.

Throughout Denis's campaign, Kings answered phones, carried placards, and mobilized voters door-to-door. On election night, a cadre of Kings stood by, policing the polls for voter fraud. Incumbent Angelo Del Toro complained, "It's nasty—they're gangsters and a threat." Denis lost the election by 160 votes. He said that if he'd won, he'd have been "proud to say the Latin Kings have a man in Albany."

Since the federal indictment was handed down, Denis hasn't tried to distance himself from his former associates. "If you talk to the young men and women in my campaign, they did not consider themselves a part of a gang," he says. "I could never imagine these young men and women carrying out the supposed orders in these alleged letters. There might be a failure to distinguish between the law-abiding and the law-breaking segments of the LKs. Unfortunately, this feeds into the cultural bias and outright prejudice."

Whatever their public image, the Latin Kings' street clout remains unquestioned, and with Latinos the fastest-growing minority in America, their juice will only increase. They are sometimes compared to the Young Lords, an organization that began as a Puerto Rican gang but evolved into a revolutionary political group in the late 1960s, making their mark with innovative demonstrations like draping the Statue of Liberty in a Puerto Rican flag. It's a comparison King Blood welcomes, but there are important differences between the Latin Kings and the Young Lords.

Former Young Lords Minister of Information Pablo "Yonuba" Guzman understands the energy that fuels the Latin Kings. "One reason why an organization like the Latin Kings exists is because they want to protect their turf," he says. "You see, in the streets, you either grow up or die." Now a CBS reporter, Guzman still remembers the Young Lords' street battles with police. "We drove the cops crazy because we walked with a certain amount of pride. The cops got threatened. Though our phenomenon was different, a lot of us can sympathize with the Latin Kings in their struggles. But you can't condone mugging or drug dealing."

Back in the empty visitors' lounge at the Metropolitan Correctional Center, King Blood smiles at the question of his own power. "If I had the power to build something, I would build something so our young people could learn about our culture. Because as long as you are proud of yourself, man, you can accomplish anything you want."

He turns and leans on a window ledge, staring out as though his spirit has transcended these prison walls. His trial begins October 19. He faces several life terms if convicted. "They can take everything from me," he says. "But they ain't never going to take my kingdom from me. Because my kingdom is in my heart." ☐

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Kirk Franklin and his choir
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Pennies From Heaven

With booming sales figures and newfound street cred, gospel has become a music-biz force to be reckoned with. *By Joyce E. Davis*



Kirk Franklin has been known to rewrite a few choice lyrics on the spot: "The most beautiful thing in this world is being saved." Ex-Cameo member John P. Kee has developed a new spiritual sound that he calls "Sunday morning hip hop." But perhaps Reverend Run says it best: "I came into this game to do like I did it in Run-D.M.C. I only know selling millions of records, and I don't plan to come to God and not do just as well."

Since 1993, when Kirk Franklin & the Family's self-titled platinum debut album was released, gospel has come into its own as a music-business force to be reckoned with. Franklin, 25, and other members of his generation have incorporated their love of Jesus into an up-to-date mélange that draws heavily on rhyming skills, sampling, and remixes. The result more closely resembles contemporary R&B than the gospel music of Mahalia Jackson or even the Edwin Hawkins Singers—and is making a heavenward ascent up the charts.

The line between gospel and R&B was always thin, even before Aretha Franklin and Al Green. That may be because "85 to 90 percent of your R&B singers come out of the church," according to Kee. In the past, many companies marketed gospel projects to the same old church folk. "For a long time, BeBe and I had to fight just to get marketed as artists," says CeCe Winans, looking back on the days when she started singing professionally with her brother, before gospel was big money. "I had to tell them, 'Don't tell me somebody doesn't want to hear me and you haven't even given them a chance to hear it yet.'"

But gospel's relationship with secular music is now cozier than ever. Franklin, whose new album, *Whatcha Lookin' at*, reached No. 3 on *Billboard's* R&B chart, listens to D'Angelo and the Notorious B.I.G., and counts T-Boz and Ice Cube among his fans. He has a particularly close relationship with R. Kelly. "He's a very positive and spiritual brother who is just misunderstood," says Franklin, who says he may work on a project with Kelly in the near future.

If new gospel artists are looking to line their pockets, the time is ripe. In the past few years, all the major gospel labels have been bought by established record and publishing companies trying to get in on the game. The Recording Industry Association of America estimated sales of gospel music in 1994 to be 3.3 percent of all music sales, up from 2.5 percent in 1990; that puts it above jazz (3.0 percent). And last September, *Billboard's* gospel charts were put on SoundScan, which tabulates general record sales data. Now gospel can be compared with other genres of music on a level playing field.

Some in the gospel industry are worried that crossover success and the influx of money will lead to a watered-down message. "If you can say 'Jesus' and still get a platinum record, then you have crossed over, but you took the cross with you," says Vicki Mack Latillaide, CEO of Gospo Centric (Franklin's label), which does consulting for secular music companies that are entering the gospel arena. "But I get concerned about all of these newcomers who are gonna come in and out because gospel is the flavor of the month."

Other execs, though, have a more pragmatic approach. Demetrus Alexander, VP of Warner Alliance's Gospel Music Division, knows even gospel will have to compete to survive in the mainstream. "I don't think hip hop is going to turn its airwaves over to us," he says. "We may have a stronger voice, but the enemy isn't going to hand you his keys."

What's no longer clear, however, is who the "enemy" is. Artists are now straddling the fence more than ever, though most are still concerned with maintaining their own identities. Reverend Run's new label, Kev Run, has signed three high-profile gospel artists: Soul Tempo, Bobby Walker and the Zoo Brothers, and Sin Assasin. But as a performer, Run primarily sticks to nonreligious material with Run-D.M.C. Franklin, on the other hand, is having to resist literally getting pulled into the role of MC. He's had fans rip his clothes off—not what most people normally envision happening at a gospel concert. "Some of the kids were looking at me in an R. Kelly light or something," he says, "and they got excited and pulled me offstage."

But some things haven't changed. In the final analysis, all of the artists will tell you that they're not singing to make money but to glorify the Lord and touch lives. Grammy-nominated Yolanda Adams says she's gotten scores of letters saying that her song "Give It to Him" has saved kids from committing suicide. And Da'dra Crawford, a member of the popular group Anointed, has also experienced the true power of gospel: "At one of our concerts, a woman approached the autograph table and told us that our song 'It's in God's Hands Now' saved her marriage. What do you say to something like that?" □



CeCe Winans



Yolanda Adams



John P. Kee



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NEW LINE CINEMA

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is strictly for your moth-
er's card parties. You
think Motown style is strictly
from your crazy uncle's closet.
You are obviously still cab-
bage-patching to the Egyp-
tian Lover. And sporting
your ninth grade haircut.

New stars, new
spirit, new style:
Motown is back.
But then
again, we
think it
never
left.

Taral Hicks
Pink cashmere/merino
wool sweater, pink wool
skirt, and pink pumps with
pilgrim buckles, all
by Versace

Andre Harrell
Black tuxedo by Giorgio
Armani

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

Photographed by Daniela Federici. Styling by Derick Procope



Johnny Gill
Black sheer shirt by
Hugo Boss

Horace Brown
Brown velvet suit
by Versace; black
button-down shirt
by Hugo Hugo
Boss; shoes by
Guess?





Queen Latifah
Black leather double-breasted
military coat by Versace

Doug E. Fresh
Black glazed shearing coat by
Donna Karan; black swirl-print
shirt by Versace; black jean by A/X
Armani Exchange; shoes by
Guess?; hat by Yohji Yamamoto;
sunglasses by Giorgio Armani



Al B. Sure!

Black chalk-stripe wool suit and silk tie, both by Boss Hugo Boss; black shirt by Giorgio Armani; sunglasses by Ray-Ban

Ladé

Black single-breasted two-button tuxedo, black double-breasted tuxedo, black single-breasted tuxedo with piped lapels, and black three-button tuxedo, all by Dolce & Gabbana; purple iridescent polyester shirt, red iridescent polyester shirt, pink silk shirt, and purple silk shirt, all by Paul Smith; black hat by Paul Smith Accessories



Jason Weaver
Black leather jacket
and black sweater vest,
both by Hugo Hugo
Boss; black jean-cut
leather pants by Versace;
shoes by Guess?

Valerie George
Black sheer knit wool
blend sheath and black
sheer silk chiffon dress
with bra top, both by
Dolce & Gabbana;
shoes by Susan Bennis
Warren Edwards

Zhané
Black merino wool
coat and white wool coat,
both by Marina Spadafora;
shoes by Susan Bennis
Warren Edwards





Michael Bivins
Orange faux-fur
jacket by Paul Smith
Jeans; orange faux-fur
hat by Paul Smith
Accessories; black
metallic band-collar
button-down shirt
by Emporio Armani;
sunglasses by
Giorgio Armani

mecca



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LOOK

Daphne Rubin-Vega

In the span of two unforgettable months off-Broadway, Daphne Rubin-Vega, 27, went from obscure actress/singer/dancer struggling to pay her East Village rent to internationally acclaimed star of the East Village-themed rock musical *Rent*. And now that this multiracial update on the Puccini opera *La Bohème* has become the toast of Broadway and snagged the 1996 Tony Award for Best Musical, Rubin-Vega is desperately trying to come to terms with her newly renovated high-*Rent* career.

"I still can't believe I don't have to scrub floors for a living," exclaims the Panamanian-born triple threat, sitting cross-legged on the floor of her sparsely furnished digs beneath naked, neon-haired Barbie dolls hanging from her parakeets' cage. "I've been trying to get a break in this business for 10 years!"

Rubin-Vega's showy role as the drug-addicted, HIV-positive S&M club dancer Mimi Marquez has already got her an A-list manager—Vanessa Williams's husband, Ramon Hervey II—and Macaulay Culkin's movie agent at William Morris. It has also landed Rubin-Vega's one-part-raspy, two-parts-Meow-Mix vocals (a leftover, no doubt, from her 1980s daze in the producer-packaged girl group Pajama Party) smack-dab in the middle of DreamWorks/Geffen Records' *Rent* original-cast album, which hits stores in late August. "That was the week I fried, but I am so psyched about this soundtrack," she says, laughing. "Eight shows a week onstage, in the studio in the daytime, and my voice is bleeding from the larynx. But I guess that goes with my character."

Of course, *Rent* is now the talk of Hollywood too, but Rubin-Vega remains nonplussed. "Shit, that could take 20 years. Look at *Evita*. Maybe my unborn daughter will be old enough to play Mimi by then." *C'est la vie bohème.*

Deborah Gregory

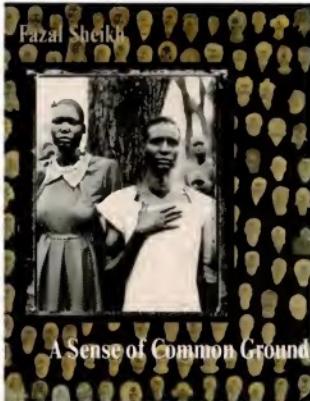
PHOTOGRAPH BY KATRIN THOMAS

word LOOK

Refugee Beauty

In *A Sense of Common Ground* (Scalo), photographer Fazal Sheikh counters the common preconception of helpless, defeated African refugees by means of 130 exquisite black-and-white portraits from the refugee and transit camps he explored in East Africa from 1992 to 1994. Shot with a large-format Polaroid camera and punctuated with handwritten testimony from tribe elders, Sheikh's pictures resonate with a delicate beauty that is sometimes disconcertingly incongruous with their subject matter: A young boy displays his handmade lyre; a newlywed Sudanese couple embrace each other; a Somali girl cradles her little brother. "When you walk to the camp, you realize quickly how people stand together in the face of what's happening to them," says Sheikh. "You don't often see that in the news renderings—the sense that people are actually capable of facing that future together and giving each other strength."

Marlaine Glickman



A Sense of Common Ground

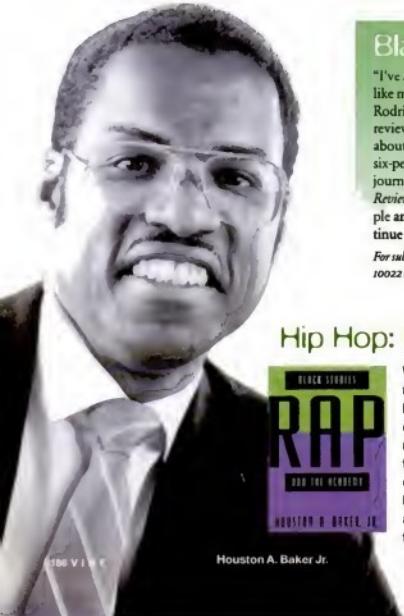
Networking Made Easy

It may have been Frederick Douglass who said "We must all help each other

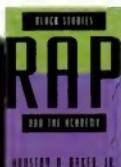


If we are to succeed," but it's George Fraser who's actually showing African-Americans how to get it done. Fraser is the president of FraserNet, a communications firm, and the author of *Success Runs in Our Race: The Complete Guide to Effective Networking in the African-American Community* (Avon). His business-connections bible trades tired rhetoric for a realistic approach to upward mobility, drawing on the history of networking, its power, and a summation of who's who among black executives. Success will thoroughly prepare you with the tools necessary to enter the multiclient business world and thrive there.

David Kaufman



Hip Hop: It's Academic



Houston A. Baker Jr.

While William Bennett has indicted hip hop for society's ills, in *Black Studies, Rap, and the Academy* (University of Chicago Press; now available in paperback), University of Pennsylvania professor Houston A. Baker Jr. places the genre in a more enlightening context. Baker equates the emergence of rap's cultural/political significance with the nationwide rise of black studies at universities, citing both phenomena as institutions that challenge America's accepted Eurocentric ideals. Baker's thick academic language occasionally weighs down the text and risks alienating his intended readership: the hip hop masses. But the book's conclusion—that tools of the culture, such as boom boxes and African-American literature, provide blacks with more social control over everything from parks to colleges—serves justice to its entire audience.

Marcus Reeves



SIMPLY'S DUTY:
BULLETS, SUMMER READINGS

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1. You can't hide from the LIGHT baby. With mad beats and fly people, the COORS LIGHTSHOW is the place to be! Skiing the slopes at Sun Valley, comedy night in New York, showcasing new acts in Oakland, the COORS LIGHTSHOW is more than a party. It's all that, inside and out. You never know when we are gonna spot ya representin' at the COORS LIGHTSHOW.

2. Coors Light anyone? That's right, we in the house! All of Oakland was takin' it light at the COORS LIGHTSHOW.

Two floors of dancing, a fashion show, talent show and gift give-aways kept Oakland light on its feet.

"COORS LIGHT GOES DOWN SILKY SMOOTH!" Hey, is that Tongel?

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4. Coors Light Black Skifest '96 was chilly and we don't mean con carne. Idaho laid out the snowdrift carpet, and that's all we needed to hear.

"THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO ENJOY A COORS LIGHT, AND THAT'S ICE COLD." 5. Coors Light knows that nothin' melts the ice better than a little body heat, and with snow honeys like Janet, Traci and Janell, need we say more? "IT'S THE KIND OF DRINK THAT MAKES YOU WANNA KICK OFF YA BOOTS."

6. TAKE IT LIGHT means SHARE THE LOVE. The COORS LIGHTSHOW brought hundreds of people together from all around the way, including Janet and her new admirers. "NICE AND EASY, NICE AND COLD. THIS IS THE WAY YOU END THE DAY." 7. And last but definitely not least, you know YOUR MOTHER DIDN'T RAISE YOU TO BE A DRUNK. Just a PSA reminder to TAKE IT LIGHT.



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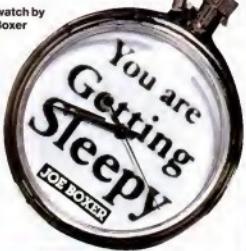


7

Take it light™
Coors LIGHT

style LOOK

Clip-on watch by
Joe Boxer



Cap by Phat Farm;
backpack by Maurice Malone

Gear: Accessories

Whether you're going back to school or just trying to keep it cool this fall, you'll need some fun, colorful, and affordable accessories to spark your look. Here's a peek at what's hot this season. Who says fashion can't be functional?

Caps by Echo Unlimited;
backpack by Odyssey



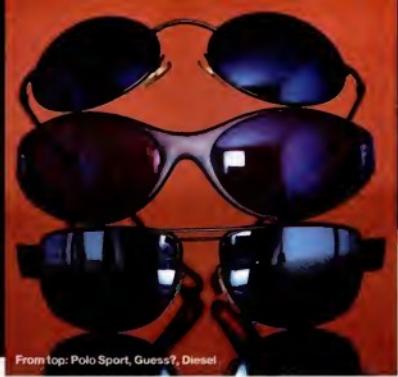
Caps by Papi, Black Five



In-line skate
bag by Eastpak



Hat by 2B; backpack by
Esprit; travel bag by Label
for Laura Whitcomb



From top: Polo Sport, Guess?, Diesel



Clockwise from top: Nautica, Joe Boxer,
Esprit, Swiss Army



From top: Gianfranco Ferré,
Todd Oldham



Scent: New Men's Colognes

Remember when there were only four colognes that every man wore? If it wasn't Brut, it was Old Spice, and if it wasn't Drakkar Noir, it was Cool Water. Well, those days are gone, as the recent explosion of men's fragrances from top fashion designers indicates. Here's the lowdown on the best:

Gianni Versace's Jeans line, which so far consists of citrus-scented Blue Jeans and Green Jeans, plans to release a new scent every 18 months. Issey Miyake's L'Eau d'Issey Pour Homme sparkles with Japanese citron and warm spices. Comme des Garçons combines a mandarin orange fragrance with spicy amber. Liz Claiborne's Curve is fresh, with floral overtones. After 20 years of producing Opium for women, Yves Saint Laurent unveils Opium for Men, an intensely spicy mix of galanga and Szechuan pepper. Paco, from Paco Rabanne, hopes to compete with



From left: Curve, Opium, Paco,
Green Jeans, CK One



From left: Blue Jeans, L'Eau d'Issey,
Comme des Garçons, Le Male

Calvin Klein's CK One in the unisex department. Speaking of which, if you're tired of CK One, prepare for the new CK Be, a cool, subtle musk, which will launch in September. Never one to be outdone, Jean Paul Gaultier presents Le Male, a breeze of lime and lavender musk, created to "evoke the sensuality of a naked body on a sun-drenched beach." Now, that's no Old Spice.

Andrea M. Duncan



Sunglasses by Tommy Hilfiger;
cap by School of Hard Knocks

stage/screen LOOK

Actor: Terrence Howard



Tough-shelled Terrence Howard, 27, honed his acting skills the hard way: in the principal's office. "Getting into so much trouble, I learned to lie," says the Cleveland-raised actor. "I'd fake an asthma attack or I'd have a nervous fit just so they would think I was crazy." Talk about crazy: While visiting New York, Howard says he unwittingly struck up a conversation with a casting agent on the street whom the actor's uncle was attempting to pickpocket. The agent took a liking to Howard and gave him his first talking part, on *The Cosby Show*.

Distinguished appearances in *Dead*

Presidents, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, and *Sunset Park* followed. Next up: the roles of drug dealer Jimmy the Warlock in *Johns* (due out this fall), and lawyer Greg Sparks in the sitcom *Sparks* (premiering in August on UPN). And Howard has been approached to play Jimi Hendrix in the Hughes brothers' upcoming biopic. "Someone said I may have to drop acid to get the feel," he says. "I have never in my life been afraid of a role as I am of this one." It sure is a far cry from the principal's office. *Marcus Reeves*



Shoot: Busta Rhymes

Text and photos by Lisa Leone

Marcus Rayboy is directing Busta Rhymes's "It's a Party," featuring Zhané. The video, says Rayboy, is about "the anticipation of the evening, the party." And this party is being shot in the Spy Bar in Manhattan's SoHo district. Stars float in and out all day for cameos: Soul for Real, the Beastie Boys' MCA, De La Soul's Posdnuos. MCA has to leave early, but Busta pleads with him, "Come on, just give me 10 minutes." MCA agrees, but after 10 he's out.

A few nights later, the Westbury Hotel is the location for the exterior scenes. One shot uses a crane to catch Busta and Zhané getting out of his Mercedes and strutting past the crowd—which includes Vanessa del Rio—and into the club. By the time all the shots are completed, it's 6:00 a.m. The party is finally over.



Ten Years Later: Tisha Campbell

How many of you guys out there remember Tisha Campbell in NBC's prime-time comedy *Rags to Riches*? As the adopted sassy sweetheart Marva Foley, teenage Tisha left the audience in stitches with her adolescent antics. That was back in 1987. Since then, she's starred in Spike Lee's *School Daze* and the Hudlin Brothers' *House Party*. In 1992 Tisha came out with an eponymous R&B album, which made a little bit of noise with the help of the soulful single "Push," but quickly died out. More recently, she's become a household name as the spunky wife of Martin Payne on Fox's *Martin*; her *I Love Lucy*-type flair has made her character one of the most popular African-American wives on TV. No question about it: Tisha Campbell has left the rags behind, and the riches just keep on coming. *The Blackspoon*

Film: 'Kansas City'



With his new film *Kansas City* (opening August 16), Robert Altman, the maverick director responsible for *The Player* and *Short Cuts*, has finally found the perfect subject to show off his multilayered, improvisational style: jazz. "Bob wanted to let the music flow with as little interruption as was necessary," says saxophonist Craig Handy, who plays Coleman Hawkins. "He told us to play the tune from beginning to end with solos, and he'd say, 'Hey, whatever happens happens.'"

Set in 1934 in Charlie Parker's (and Altman's) hometown, *Kansas City* stars Harry Belafonte as a gangster/philosopher and features hot young jazz players such as Joshua Redman, Christian McBride, and James Carter. The film is ripe with conflict, cross-cutting between dual kidnappings and all-night jam sessions culminating in a fierce sax battle between Redman and Handy. "What the rap artists do today is just another form of what they were doing in Kansas City," says Handy. "If you go back throughout history, there's always been a cutting contest of some form or other. In every aspect of life."

Marlaine Glickman

Broadcast: WorldSpace

Wu-Tang in Rwanda? Mobb Deep in Mali? Beginning in mid-1998, a black-run Washington D.C. firm plans to start broadcasting music, news, and information throughout the so-called Third World via satellite, becoming the first large-scale provider of such services. WorldSpace Inc., founded in 1990 by chairman/CEO Noah Samara, an American of Ethiopian-Sudanese descent, will charge broadcasters roughly \$50 an hour to lease one of up to 288 digital channels that can cover about half a continent—a much larger area than can be reached by current shortwave technology, and without technical problems like static. The first satellite, to be launched in 1998, will beam signals to Africa and the Middle East. Company spokesperson Archie L. Rich II

sees the possibility for a "Kiss-FM in Africa—an opportunity to broadcast African-American music in an area that, right now, doesn't have a whole lot of access to it."

While the idea of duplicating the grotesque excesses of American black radio in Africa gives one the chills, getting crucial information to millions of people is an exciting prospect. WorldSpace expects news on such topics as women's health, farming, and nutrition to be broadcast—in many languages. If

Samara can really imbue the \$1 billion radio network "with vision and a sense of social responsibility," as he has said, then the only remaining obstacle will be figuring out how to sell the poorest people on earth compact digital radios at a cost of about two month's wages.

Harry Allen

Audio: Pro Bass Shaker

Introducing the equivalent of hair extensions for car-stereo speakers: They give you more, but they ain't real. Hooked up to a 50-watts-per-channel amplifier and mounted under your seat, the Aura Pro Bass Shaker lets your backbone experience the sensation of big bass without dangerous sound-pressure levels. It's a cheap way (\$239 a pair) to give your ride the effect of a resonating, car-alarm-starting monster on wheels. But forget about sharing the vibe with the world outside—the Pro Bass Shaker is your own private earthquake, and you can't feel it unless you're sitting on top of it.

Lang Phipps

CD-ROM: Mixman



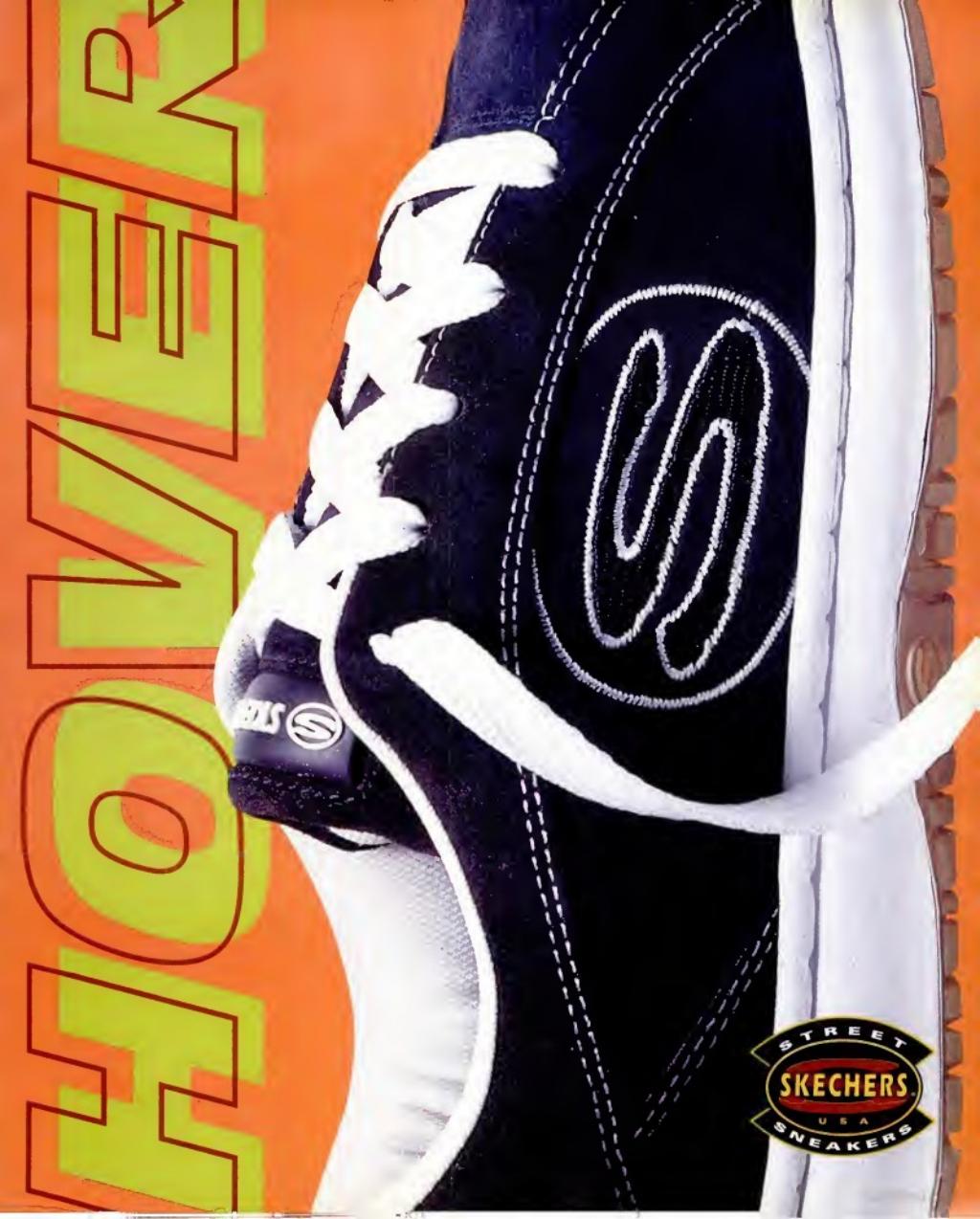
Remixes are nothing new to the music industry. The Fugees, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, and of course Puffy have all ventured into the remixing arena. Now it's your turn.

Mixman Technologies is creating a series of interactive CD-ROMs that let you twist the knobs yourself in the comfort of your own rumpus room. Using 16 digital tracks that have been stored separately, you can punch in the bass line or the kick drum at any time. Tempo too fast? Slow it down, or loop the percussive fills. You're running the show!

The series' debut CD, titled *Spin Control*, features dance music (techno, acid jazz, etc.). It's listed at \$39.95 and can be purchased off Mixman's Web site (<http://www.mixman.com>). Another CD featuring Naughty by Nature and K7 is in development. If you're online, you can E-mail your remixes to friends, or better yet, visit the Mixman Web site and enter remix contests.

Gregg Bishop





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PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRAD HARRIS

This is the eighth in a series of AIDS awareness and fundraising projects by the Red Hot Organization. To date, these efforts have donated over six million dollars to AIDS organizations around the world.

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At present there is no cure for AIDS, but it is almost entirely preventable. To protect yourself and prevent the spread of HIV: 1) use a new latex (as opposed to "natural") condom every time you have vaginal or anal intercourse; 2) don't share needles—even for piercing or tattooing; 3) use a dental dam for oral sex with women (you can use regular—but not microwavable—plastic wrap, or cut open a rolled latex condom.)

Worldwide, AIDS effects people of African descent more than any other group. Nearly 60% of Americans with AIDS are people of color and HIV infection is rising five times faster in this group than any other. AIDS is the leading cause of death for young black men, and the number one cause of death for all Americans aged 25-44. 75% of all HIV positive people around the world became infected through heterosexual sex.

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REVOLUTIONS

NAS 'IT WAS
WRITTEN' COLUMBIA

BY KRIS EX

When Queensbridge, N.Y.'s Nasir Ben Olu Dara Jones emerged onto hip hop's soundstage in 1994 with his debut, *Illmatic*, there were lights and bells worthy of the Second Coming. The album was ordained a classic even before its release. Along with Snoop Doggy Dogg's 1993 *Doggy Style*, Wu-Tang Clan's 1993 *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)*, and the Notorious B.I.G.'s 1994 *Roady to Die*, Nas's *Illmatic* ushered in a new school of hip hop that sought to balance old-school rhyme ethics with a sense of greenback-driven artistry.

His counterparts created under the keen visions of Dr. Dre, the RZA, and Sean "Puffy" Combs, respectively—and all went pop on their own terms. Nas, though, benefited from some of hip hop's most revered bards/melisters: DJ Premier, Pete Rock, Q-Tip, and Large Professor. Then-newcomer L.E.S. also provided tracks to back the MC's metaphysical pondering, the words that represented Nas's life's-a-bitch-and-then-you-die/that's-why-wr-get-high mentality. And yet the album sold only 200,000 copies.

So is *Illmatic* truly a classic? Yes—because it brought back to hip hop a concentration on lyrics and lyricism. But at the same time, no—because *Illmatic* doesn't stand on its own merits as albums like BDP's 1987 *Criminal Minded*, 1989's *The Greatest Adventures of Slick Rick*, or Eric B. and Rakim's heralded 1987 *Paid in Full*. Were the comparisons of Nas to the legendary Rakim justified? Yes—because like Rakim, Nas brings poetry directly to the forefront. But at the same time, no—not because Nas isn't (yet) able to bring together mood and lyrics and flow simultaneously to create something at once witty and profound.

But *It Was Written* is on fire—at least as far as being money-driven. Bypassing his former producers, Nas's new follow-up is in the hands of pop production troupe the TrackMasterz (L.L. Cool J, the Notorious B.I.G.), while the

rest falls to huge talents like Dr. Dre, DJ Premier, and Mobb Deep's Havoc. The addition of the TrackMasterz and Dre is an obvious attempt to make up for the lack of radio-playable material on *Illmatic*. But still, the artist shines through.

The first single, "If I Ruled the World," features the Fugees' Lauryn Hill singing the chorus from Kurtis Blow's 1985 hit. In it, Nas details a wish list that's half Black Panther 10-point platform and half the crazy ransom list from *Dog Day Afternoon*. But while Nas's hopes for drug rehab, reparations, and endless blow jobs paint a picture that both b-boys and activists can cheer for, the TrackMasterz song is a loop-o-rama—Whodini's 1984 "Friends" gets worn out.

Similarly, the painfully hopeful "Black Girl Lost" is overwhelmed by vocals from Jodeci's JoJo Hailey. The L.E.S.-produced song woos heavy rotation while the MC makes the type of passionate perusals that leave lyrical aficionados genuflecting at his mike stand. "You got a job / Part-time and school's your night thing," he raps. "Wit' dreams to settle down / It ain't far from now / You gettin' interviewed / But your boss is into gettin' screwed / Typical day that the black girl sees / Coming home wanting more from a college degree."

The hook, "Nas is coming," courses out, smooth as velvet. "Really?" you want to say. "Where is Nas coming from? Where is he going? And why is this overly grandiose song in the middle of the album?"

Sometimes, though, Nas's quest for the big time works out well. Smooth bass lines and frail drums come together substantially on "Street Dreams"—a makeover of the Eurythmics' 1983 "Sweet Dreams." "Silent Murder" gets its strength from Soul II Soul's 1990 "Get a Life." But on the tepid "Take It in Blood" (where Nas drops lines like "You'll be i-light like / Blood money in a pimp's come"), the music lulls while Nas's verbiage pistol-whips you.

What should have been the binding for *It Was Written* is the East-meets-West venture "Nas Is Coming." Produced by Dr. Dre, "Coming" unfurls like a lush movie musical. The hook, "Nas is coming," courses out, smooth as velvet. But there's no substance. "Really?" you want to say. "Where is Nas coming from? Where is he going? And why is this overly grandiose song in the middle of the album?"

But style over substance wins on "Affirmative Action," which serves as the launching pad for Nas's clique—the Firm—which features AZ, Foxy Brown, and Cormega. Over TrackMasterz' keys-as-strings arrangement, the quartet evoke hilarious images—such as AZ's "Corleone fettuccine Capone" self-description. And Brown, continuing her MO, goes on a minute-and-a-half journey that touches no less than three car companies, four fashion designers, six pseudoerotic locales, and ends with an appropriation of Smooth da Hustler's broken-language-style drug-cooking mathematics.

It's the DJ Premier-produced "I Give You the Power" and the two tracks created by Havoc that Queensbridge's finest seems most at home. "Power" smacks together falling piano notes with a set of stuttering drums to frame Nas's picturesque tale of a lamented gunner. Havoc's "The Set Up" is a story of revenge, and the Mobb-assisted freestyle, "Live Nigga Rap," spills over hard, gloomy percussion.

The problems with *It Was Written* are not in what is written or how it flows but in its consistently aggressive attempts at pop music. When Nas arrived, he was touted as a microphone god. He remains a poignant figure with a panoramic view of the real and metaphorical ghetto. And his flow is still astounding. But Nas requires a sonic tapestry a multihued and breathtaking as his rhymes—and then the pop success he obviously desires will occur, organically. *It Was Written* is adequate. Unfortunately, though, Nas's own second coming isn't nearly as satisfying as his first one.

FROST 'SMILE NOW, DIE LATER'

RUTHLESS/RELATIVITY



While his Latin peers—K7, Mellow Man Ace—were profiting from bilingual pop, Kid Frost placed integrity over market demands. With his new album, *Smile Now, Die Later*, the Brown Pridester demonstrates that for him, nothing has changed since his 1990 debut, *Hispanic Causing Panic*. Older and wiser, Frost has dropped the *Kid* from his name and enlisted the musical help of A.L.T. and O.G. Enius. He kicks socially conscious lyrics over balladry ("Rest in Peace"), melancholic Chicano groove ("La Raza PT. II"), Cold 187um's morbid funk ("How Many Ways Can You Lose a Body"), and breakbeat fusions that evoke EPMD in their prime ("Mari").

With *Smile Now, Die Later*, Frost maintains his standing as a hero to la raza, leading his Mexican Superfriends against igno-

rant wannabe G's. No longer a kid, Frost is still as serious about rap as he was during the backyard parties he rocked with Ice-T more than 10 years ago.

Ronin Ro



MARLENA SHAW 'DANGEROUS'

CONCORD JAZZ

So many of today's gifted vocalists squander their talents by confusing style with ostentation. While Marlena Shaw is technically a jazz artist, having toured early in her career with Count Basie's band and becoming the first female artist ever signed

to the legendary Blue Note label, her new album, *Dangerous*, could be a primer for young singers on, well, soul. Whether dancing playfully around the Harold Arlen/Johnny Mercer classic "Out of This World," waxing tender and pensive on a rueful ballad like "Blackberry Winter," or asserting her faith on the blues-and-gospel-flavored "Keep On Trustin'," Shaw lets her supple, burnished alto be guided by forceful intuition and tempered by elegant restraint. Listen and learn.

Elysa Gardner

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BOOM SHOTS

REVOLUTIONS
SWEET JUICE
READY TO RUMBLE
BY ROB KENNER

It's a shame how many women in dancehall get exploited as sex objects. But 24-year-old LADY SAW never stumbled into that trap. Rather, she jumped in headfirst, lustily turning the tables on bedroom bullies. "A lot of women complain, 'It's really hard for me,'" she says in a quiet, considerate voice. "But I don't see why. Because I'm determined and I'm good. I'll always be Jamaica's No. 1 and America's No. 1 DJ. I'm the empress of the land." When Saw gets raw, as on her sure-shot crowd pleaser "Stab Out the Meat," she can stand with any X-rated DJ from General Echo to Yellowman to Shabba. Slackness is hardly her only mode, but her sexual frankness does get results. Check out Saw's intimidating cover photo on her new album *Give Me the Reason* (V.P. Records): She's sheathed head-to-toe in black leather, rocking a bald dome and a riding crop!

Offstage, though, Lady Saw still sometimes sounds like the innocent country girl from the parish of St. Mary's who used to stand outside the dancehall gate, listening to Youthman Promotion sound when it passed through her area. Back then, the star attraction was Tenor Saw (killed in his prime, but best remembered for the extra-classic anthem "Ring the Alarm"), whose ghostly, warbling voice the young Lady Saw would emulate at home-town dances, eventually moving beyond imitation to origination.

"There was one time when the big sound Stereo One with Lieutenant Stitchie came to my parish," she recalls. "They was doing their ting, and I went up there and I said"—she lowers her voice to a near whisper—"Beg you a talk on the mike." And them nah pay me no mind until a guy from my area said, "Give her a talk, she bad." When I started deejaying, the whole place was getting really hot."

After slapping Wickerman and Captain Barkey in head-to-head competition, the young unknown came up against Stitchie, then one of the island's top performers. "After he did his lyrics, he was walking away. I said, 'No, no, you ain't going nowhere, man. Are you 'fraid or dead?'"

It didn't take long for word to spread that a girl from country had mashed up three veteran DJs. Saw soon went to Kingston, where she began a recording career in earnest. For the past three years, she has ranked as reggae's top female DJ, all the while refusing to be typecast as a dancehall artist. Her new album includes credible country and gospel-y singing—even a slightly cheesy house track—and she's dabbled in soca and rap as well. But these talents are all eclipsed by the damage she does in raggamuffin mode. "When I'm going onstage, is no fool-fool thing," she proclaims. **"I don't care about people who love to talk negative about me being loud. I want to know if I see you jumping and screaming."**

Lady Saw's been banned from events due to her X-rated material—even as equally slack male artists continue to get play. Her solution for setbacks? Writing songs that deal with the double standards. Uncompromising lyrics are both her damnation and her salvation: From the lifesaving advice of "Condom" to the sister-empowering sentiments of "Name Nuh Stand Fi Sex," Saw tells truths that dancehall's testosterone dongs overlook.



RAKIM'S
T REVOLUTIONS SOUTHERN RAP
P 10



SIGN: Dollar

ROOTS: Wyandanch, Long Island

CURRENT PLAYLIST:

SMOOTH DA HUSTLER—Once Upon a Time in America

MOBB DEEP—The Infamous

NAS—Illmatic

N.W.A.—Efil4zaggin

EPMD—Business as Usual

SLICK RICK—The Great Adventures of Slick Rick

WU-TANG CLAN—Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)

THE LOST BOYZ—Legal Drug Money

BOOGIE DOWN PRODUCTIONS—Criminal Minded

PUBLIC ENEMY—It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back

SONG HE PLAYS WHEN IT'S TIME TO GET BUSY:

Anything by Anita Baker

LAST MOVIE HE RENTED:

Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls (bootleg copy)

SONG THAT ROCKED HIS HIGH SCHOOL.

DANCES:

T.I. A ROCK—“It’s Yours”

FIRST LIVE SHOW HE ATTENDED:

Cold Crush Brothers at the Armory, N.Y.C., 1982

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RHINO

GRANDMASTER FLASH & THE FURIOUS FIVE THE ADVENTURES OF GRANDMASTER, MELLE MEL & THE FURIOUS FIVE: MORE OF THE BEST

RHINO



Like the Archies, the Monkees, and Menudo, the Sugarhill Gang were a prefabricated group of nonskilled "artists" who hit upon a gimmick and then milked it for all it was worth. During the late 1970s, the trio released a string of singles that sold well mostly because there weren't many other hip hop alternatives out there. *The Best of the Sugarhill Gang* is a collection of their "classics"—most of which will be unknown to today's hip hop followers.

These days, it's fashionable to applaud the group as trendsetters, and as predecessors to today's legends. But aside from 1979's "Rapper's Delight," the Sugarhill Gang were full of beans. After their first few singles, listeners got tired of waiting for them to stop shucking and jiving. Folks wanted the raw street sounds they heard being created in parks right outside their windows.

But the Sugarhill Gang's lyrics made it sound as if the Black Power movement had never happened. They concocted Tommish raps like "Rec-bop-shoo-bee-doo / Guess what America? / We love you" and tacked happy endings onto each of their songs. Their flows were awkward, never on time, and rife with clichés. Their music, provided by the highly touted Sugarhill house band, relied on diluting fiery breakbeats and imbuing them with smooth edges the crew hoped would make their atrocious singles more palatable to white suburban ears. Songs like "Girls" and even "Apache" were astoundingly flat.

To be fair, these chunky old numbers make for good samples (the breakdown on "Hot Hot Summer Day," for example), but today's younger listener shouldn't be confused. The Sugarhill Gang are not representative of the old-school hip hop.

But, undisputably, Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five are. In their prime, they were involved in creating almost every dynamic in the "hardcore" hip hop sound. *The Adventures of Grandmaster, Melle Mel & the Furious Five: More of the Best* confirms that in addition to birthing actual "rhyming" (the late Keith "Cowboy" Wiggins was the first MC to string nursery rhymes together), the group also introduced the concepts of the drum machine (the beat box Flash played in outdoor Bronx jams) and turntable scratching ("The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel," "Showdown"). Flash regularly cut with handcuffs while harmonizing to hip hop beats ("Girls Love the Way He Spins"), and the Five added social relevance to hip hop.

Their more familiar classics ("Freedom," "The Message") were collected on Rhino's 1994 first *Best Of*; the spotlight here is on songs like "World War III" and "Sign of the Times." A timely release, this anthology gathers some of Flash and the Five's most intriguing works, featuring a cornucopia of clever topics, raw lyrics, radiant flows, and Flash's unrivaled DJ skills.

Ronin Ro

JAMES CARTER 'CONVERSIN' WITH THE ELTERS'

ATLANTIC

Many among jazz's next wave are so enamored with their role as musical promise keepers, they often forget that having fun is a big part of keeping the faith. Not so with reed man James Carter, whose gruff mode of self-expression greets the listener with an almost carnivalesque invitation to gather round—even snippets of the *Jeopardy!* theme find their way into his solos.

Conversin' With the Elders, Carter's fourth album as a leader, features a slew of radically reinterpreted standards made famous by saxophone greats of yesterday. Timeless pieces like Lester Young's "Lester Leaps In," Charlie Parker's "Parker's Mood," and John Coltrane's "Naima" are supplemented with new compositions—like Lester Bowie's buoyant "FreeReggae-HiBop"—from some of Carter's personal heroes. Harry "Sweets" Edison, Hamiet Bluiett, and Buddy Tate also add their voices to this powerful, neo-traditional manifesto. Chris H. Smith



I was in the army, home on leave, and Bang! I had my life changed.



40

The guy who hit me had no license, no insurance and three prior drunk driving convictions.



39A

He was fine the next day. I spent six months in the hospital and in rehab.

39

LA SNO talks about D.U.I.

I have to live with permanent memory loss and regular, really painful headaches.



39

I wouldn't do that to another human being. Would you?

37A

37

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JOI'AMOEBA CLEANSING SYNDROME

LIMP/PEMI

Joi's debut, 1994's *The Pendulum Vibe*, was overlooked and/or misunderstood. The album's miraculous love crooning sprouted up in R&B's boring little garden like a pretty picket fence in the projects. Thankfully, Joi continues to kick and scratch at the boundaries of rhythm and blues with her new, impressive *Amoeba Cleansing Syndrome*.

Joi's arrangements, with backing by the funky bug-

outs known as Fishbone, easily outweigh R&B's all-too-common drum machine gibberish. "Move On" borrows the zooming ride-dims of Anita Ward's 1979 disco classic "Ring My Bell," while "Take Me Home" features sly, punkadelic guitar riffs. "En So Lord Jesus" is a pristine a cappella gospel rant in which Joi paints high holy soundscapes. Honestly, cousin, ain't a damn thing changed. Joi's chance-taking persists—and beautifully.

Sacha Jenkins

CYRUS CHESTNUT 'EARTH STORIES'

ATLANTIC JAZZ

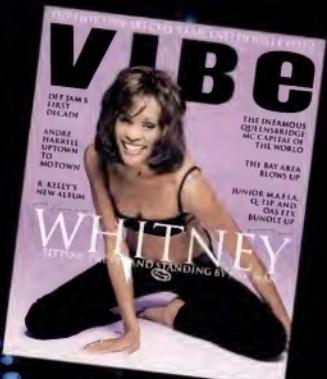


With *Earth Stories*, Cyrus Chestnut's third album as a leader, the 33-year-old pianist guides the nimble-fingered bassist Steve Kirby and gonna-be-Buddy-Rich drummer Alvester Garnett into each composition like MacArthur into Midway.

But the best and worst element of *Earth Stories* is its diversity. Chestnut strays from standards and is more experimental (writing 10 of the 11 tracks, producing all), but his styles are so varied that the album lacks continuity. Still, each arrangement alone is stellar, and whether he plays the blues ("Grandma's Blues") or rag ("Nutman's Invention #1"), Chestnut's pudgy fingers caress the ivories just enough to make them purr.

OJ Lima

DON'T THINK ABOUT IT...

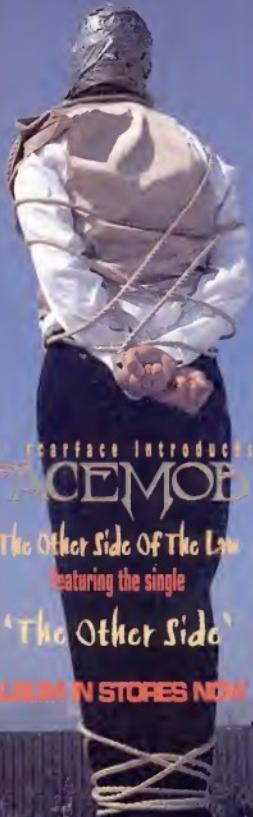


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MONIFAH 'MOODS...MOMENTS' UPTOWN/UNIVERSAL

Supervoluptuous diva Monifah is what they call an old soul. She moves slowly and deliberately, certain that when she arrives, her presence is absolute, staggering. The room will be hers. Steeped in the tradition of women who wield their gifts like whips, Monifah is always in command of her most intoxicating gift: That Voice. Breezy and wistful one moment, all muscle the next, Monifah is fittingly capable of many *Moods...Moments*.

Following "I Miss You," the smash single from the *New York Undercover* soundtrack, there isn't a wasted effort on her debut album. From the beautiful and assertive "You Don't Have to Love Me" to the honey-dipped "Lay With You," *Moods...Moments* is chock-full of surefire hits. The entire album is poised to dominate the airwaves, something producer Heavy D mastered with his infectious brand of songwriting back when other hip hop artists were regulated to mix shows.

Still, one suspects that as Monifah matures as an artist (and begins writing her own material), her instincts will lead her to a more experimental space. Jazz inflections are merely flirted with, and though she may never be as serious as a Cassandra Wilson, her energy makes you want her to surrender to a live jazz band. Or front a Fishbone-like her spinted contemporary Joi.

Inevitably, *Moods...Moments* will be compared with the endless first-name-only salsa debuts of the past year (Faith, Monica, Brandy, et al.), but that thinking would be pure laziness. Refreshingly, Monifah glows with self-satisfaction. She may be going through things, but she never appears on the verge of tears. Her healing mantra, "It's Alright," shines through the most opaque moments and offers a completely believable hope that life, love, and even our moody soul princesses will survive.

dream hampton

CULTURAS 'SIMPLEMENTE DELIA' MANNY

DEE 'EL MORENO' MANNY

Tejano has a scope that no '90s English-language music can touch. Shelly Lares's bombastic 1994 "Quiero Ser Tu Amante" stirred souped-up *Flashdance* metal disco, Kid Creole calypso, and suburban country into border polkas. And Selena's ad hoc, postmurder *Dreaming of You* (which I love more and more, and it just makes me sadder and sadder) may well be the most varied platinum album of this decade.

San Antonio's Tejano isn't quite as big, brassy, glisty, fast, loose, and break-dancey as the banda music that similarly cowboy-hatted Chicanos have been cranking out in South Cali lately, but Dee's and Culturas' discs—both slickly produced by four-decade industry fixture Manny Guerra (Texas's Quincy Jones)—abound with catchy energy and unabashed screwiness. Lots of joyful, two-beat dances with incidental whoosh effects, piglet oinks, stepped-on-rubberduck squeaks, ranch-hand yelps, bullfight fanfare, and interjected exclamations ("Hey hey, it's party time / Gimme some of that gee-gee geetar!!").

The man on the back cover of *El Moreno* is resplendent in Milli Vanilli dreads and Princely purple renaissance garb. The album is a collection of Dee's '90s Tejano hits with the Texas band Culturas. *Simplemente Delia* has hits sung by Dee's lighter-skinned former partner, Delia Gonzalez. On her CD cover, she's got hot red fingernails, lipstick, and five silver bracelets on her wrist. She looks tough. Delia lets off some searing high notes—loud, crazy "yea-haa" screeches, police sirens, accordion noises. Dee's "Loco Loco" reminds me of Rockin' Sydney's 1986 zydeco novelty hit, "My Toot Toot."

The typical disc on the Manny label (motto: "Where Jesus Is Lord") has 10 tracks and tends to have amazing singing, but so-so songwriting. Gotta admit, though: "I Love Tortillas" by Ray Comacho totally fries my corn.

Chuck Eddy



PHOTO BY EL MANNY MUSIC

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The second album from the artist Rolling Stone called the "brightest hope for '94," and Vibe magazine named it "the future of Funk."



peace beyond passion



THE NEVILLE BROTHERS 'MITAKUYE OYASIN OYASIN/ ALL MY RELATIONS'

The Neville Brothers are one of the great family stories in American music. Together and apart, they have cut many of the records that define the traditional New Orleans sound. Art's ice-cold keyboards (with the Meters) and Aaron's lunar falsetto are national treasures. But when all four brothers get together to record these days, their very range of abilities can become a problem. While still able to catch fire onstage—in genres from funk to country—the Nevilles change stylistic clothes on *Mitakuye Oyasin Oyasin/All My Relations* so fast that the grooves catch cold, and their apparent decision to go for a smooth Adult Contemporary sound only adds to the chill.

The most effective cuts on *All My Relations* are retro numbers like "Love Spoken Here," which rides Cyril and Aaron's warm-cognac vocals to VH1 heaven. World-pop tracks like "The Sound" and "Whatever You Do," however, suffer from the heartbreak of weak bottom, and the rap by Aaron's son, Jason, on "You're Gonna Make Your Momma Cry" comes off like a gimmick.

Even covers from this great bar band are smoothed way down; nothing as funky-weird as their 1992 version of Steve Miller's "Fly Like an Eagle." On the Grateful Dead's "Fire on the Mountain," you can almost hear the snoring. By the time Aaron proves once again, on "Saved by the Grace of Your Love," that he's the greatest black country singer since Ray Charles, even this stone country fan don't care enough.

Only at the end of *All My Relations*, when writer Charles' jazz rhythms and harmonies snap into Art's surging keyboard funk on "Sacred Ground," do we hear that rarest of things—a new groove—and with it, a turbulent hint of the album this fine family might could make if they were a little more selective.

Neill Bagan



HYENAS IN THE DESERT 'DIE LAUGHING'

SLAM/JAMZ/COLUMBIA

On the African plains, hyenas can often be found picking leftover carrion from the bones of a lioness's kill. Unfortunately for Chuck D's fledgling label, Slam Jamz, Hyenas from Long Island apparently do the same. Lead voice Kenneth "Kendo" Walker ignores Raekwon's 1995 "Shark Niggas [Biters]" warning ("I don't want niggas sounding like me on no album!") and rhymes in an aggressive bounce-skip-bounce style just too reminiscent of the Chef's gourmet recipe.

Hyena producer Gary G-Wiz can deftly loop a backward track, but his piano samples and sparse beats have RZA stenciled on their undersides. While the proud

kings of the hip hop jungle lay out fresh feasts with every platter, *Die Laughing* serves up bland, reheated scraps.

David Bry



NEW KINGDOM 'PARADISE DON'T COME CHEAP'

GEE STREET

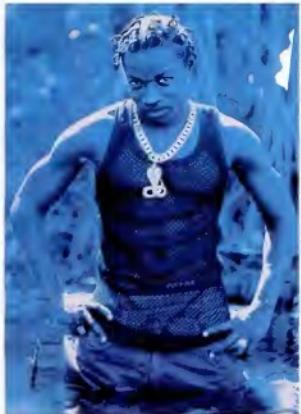
On New Kingdom's second album, members Nosaj and Sebastian attempt the kind of grunge-rap fusion that the soundtrack to 1993's *Judgment Night* went for—and succeed. Without betraying their hip hop roots, the Brooklyn twosome defiantly swing out against homogeneity, mixing up chunky inner-city beats with lumbering blasts of guitar, lazy rhymes, gritty funk, and whacked-out samples. Initially, *Paradise Don't Come Cheap* has the thundering, chaotic effect of a train wreck. But upon repeated listening sessions, *Paradise* tightens up.

In New Kingdom's warped empire, anything goes. And the new album expresses the duo's anarchic zeal with catchy enthusiasm. "Kickin' Like Bruce Lee" is an incongruous meeting of growled vocals, muscular guitar riffs, and reckless turntable scratching. It's a singular song—enhanced by the caustic opening refrain: "Shut the fuck up / Shut the fuck up / Would you please shut the fuck up?" Nice. There are fiery moments as well, on mind-boggling tracks like "Mexico or Bust" and "Journey to the Sun." In "Animal," though, the crew take a breather from the cacophony to rhapsodize over a calm, psychedelic groove.

New Kingdom's wild style leaves them open to comparisons to everyone from Black Sabbath and Frank Zappa to Funkadelic and Cypress Hill. While Nosaj and Sebastian have a bit to learn in the songwriting department, their way with musical textures is a welcome retreat from the usual moth-eaten grooves. With *Paradise Don't Come Cheap*, New Kingdom mash varied influences into their own mammoth sound.

Aidan Vaziri

MAD COBRA 'MILKMAN' EMI



Four years ago Mad Cobra tore the roof off the mutha in Jamaican dancehalls, riding the wave of his platinum single "Flex." But with his second album, *Milkman*, he takes his hardcore ragamuffin lyrics to another level—raw and uncut. From boasts about his genitalia's proportions on "Big Long John" to the off-court physical action of "Slam Dunk," Mad Cobra's prowess between the sheets dominates the album.

There are a few quasi-endearing moments. The semi-a cappella ballad "It Started Out So Good" turns a sympathetic ear to lonesome ladies who need quality time, and the country-tinged "She's Lonely" is a wake-up call to men who cheat: "Stop disrespecting your lady / She's gonna be someone else's baby / No ifs or maybe." "Know fi Wine" and "Money & Honey" flip the script on the conquests of gold-digging females.

Notables on the consciousness tip include "By Grace, Not Law," which delivers a straightforward message on getting caught in a corrupt system ("If you don't know wha' mi sing you can sing / No mi friend / No make no man tell you how much you condemn"), and "Sting Night," a fast-paced lyrical battle with veteran rapper Ninjaman that gives the wicked flavas of a "live" session.

On *Milkman*, the combination of rap and reggae tracks meshes into one parallel groove. That's largely due to the heavy-duty skills of Jamaican producers Clifton "Specialist" Dillon (Shabba Ranks), Tony Kelly, Dave Kelly, and hip hop mixmaster Salaam Remi (Ini Kamoze, the Fugees). Each brings something special to Cobra's "get your groove on" party. *Debra Bass*



LADAЕ 'LADAЕ' MOTOWN

Six of the songs on Ladae's eponymous debut are exquisite. The quartet—Quent Boogie, Lil' Tone, Darren, and Brian—sing earnestly through "Maybe If I Pray," "Don't Leave Me," "Somewhere," "Don't Take Your Love," "Fallin' Back," and "Beautiful." On these (as with the rest of the album), Ladae leave riffs, runs, and other vocal acrobatics out. But this kind of vocal purity only works with keen production—which is where Ladae's other nine tracks flounder. These young boys' voices cry out for simple, clean music. Too bad it's not what producer Al B. Sure! gave them. *Marcia A. Cole*

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BAR OF SOAP	ELM STREET BAR
GREEN ELEPHANT	MAIN STREET ASYLUM

LOS ANGELES

MOLLY MADDENS	BAR DELUXE
FORMOSA	MUGOLS
DIAMOND CLUB	BIRDS
GHENHIS COHEN	THE GEM
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MAXI PRIEST 'MAN WITH THE FUN'

VIRGIN RECORDS

Man With the Fun, Maxi Priest's latest, highly anticipated release, has all the components of a hit: a rich blend of reggae, pop, and R&B rhythms; fresh lyrics; hot guest stars like Shaggy and Buju Banton; and a team of on-target producers including Robert Livingston, Sting, Clive Hunt, Andy Marvel, and Handel Tucker.

On this 14-track album, Maxi, smooth delivery intact, isn't only the man with the fun but also the man with the message. From the pop reggae first single, "That Girl," to the R&B cut "Won't Let It Slip Away," the album praises, pleads, challenges, affirms, warns, and exclaims. But most of all, it involves.

The sound of *Man With the Fun* ranges from upbeat to meditative to butter-smooth. The provocative "That Girl," featuring the boombastic rapping of Maxi's Grammy-winning labelmate Shaggy, sets the tone for fun, which is underscored by the cool rhythms of the title track and sustained by such upbeat cuts as

the wicked groove "Heartbreak Lover" (featuring Buju Banton and Beres Hammond).

"Celebrating the beauty and the paradox of individuality," as Maxi puts it, "All Kinds of People" is a melodic cut that owes much of its irresistible appeal to the slow, soft conga drumbeat. Other standout conscious tunes include "Love Will Crossover," "Watching the World Go By," and "Frienemy," while "Golden Teardrops" and "Ain't It Enough" offer soulful R&B.

This is indeed a growth album for Maxi, who has previously tasted success with the discs *Maxi Priest* and *Bona Fide*, and the chart-topping crossover hits "Close to You," "Wild World," "Set the Music to Music" (with Roberta Flack), and "Housecall" (with Shabba Ranks). Now Maxi can have his cake—and his fun too.

Denolynn Carroll

CE CE PENISTON 'MOVIN' ON'

ARM

After snarling, vampirizing, wailing, and riffing her way into urban contemporary consciousness with the most hook-laden, infectious vocal stylings this side of Chaka Khan, Phoenix-bred diva-in-waiting Ce Ce Peniston continues to prove that she's got what it takes to stick it out for the long haul.

Perhaps best known in mainstream R&B circles for a forthright command to her cheating lover to "Keep On Walkin'," Peniston's now doing the transition from club-style dance music ("Finally," "We Got a Love Thang") to mainstream R&B ("I'm in the Mood," "Inside That I Cried," "Crazy Love"). *Movin' On* finds her moving into the urban arena with a mostly pleasing outcome.

Beyond the plush jeep soul of the Dave Hall-produced title track (and first single), Peniston ventures into the streets with trademark sass, savvy, hitting the mark every time. While the floor-bustin' hip hop soul anthem "House Party" and her unwavering update of Jocelyn Brown's 1984 "Somebody Else's Guy" will probably emerge as future singles, Peniston effectively takes a more mainstream R&B approach with the gentle sway of "Last to Know," the moody, groove-oriented "If It Should Rain," and the soul-stirring riff-fest of a duet with Jodeci's JoJo, "Before I Lay."

Despite the inclusion of the low-key, stripped-down house cut "Don't Know What to Do," dance fans may feel a bit slighted by the noticeable absence of her ever-dependable club workouts; no doubt that flavor will eventually reappear in the form of remixes. Nevertheless, *Movin' On's* clear purpose was to cement Peniston's apparent R&B chops. Mission accomplished.

RUDI MEYER



RUFFA' DIAMOND IN THE RUFF' MCA

Like most DJs of Caribbean heritage who move to the States—Shaggy, Shinehead, Don Jagwarr—Ruffa's debut is predictably crossover, formulaic with smooth R&B vocals and rugged hip hop beats. But certainly not without nerve. Rather than use the same Ol' Samples, the 21-year-old producer/musician wrote his own hooks; he can offer up a soft ballad like "Don't You Worry" (featuring labelmate newcomer Tasha) or hardcore cuts like "What Does It Mean" featuring Shynehim and "Representin'" with Kool G Rap. Pity, though; Ruffa is ultimately his own worst enemy. His patois-less, gruff, and, at times, forced delivery simply overwhelms Diamond, making it more radio-ready than vintage dancehall. —Judson Kilpatrick

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FISHBONE 'CHIM CHIM'S BADASS REVENGE'

ROWDY

For most of Fishbone's eighth album, *Chim Chim's Badass Revenge*, producer (and sometime keyboardist) Dallas Austin fine-tunes the funky rock five without muting their explosive high-energy sound. Witness that at its best on the thrashy, tragic fast-life chronicle "Rock Star," the nervous-paced "Beergut," and the trippy, dub-dipped "Alcoholic." Unfortunately, hymn-like interludes and the lackluster "Love...Hate" stagnate the album's overall groove—like someone rhythmically pushing a brake pedal at a headbanger ball. But overall, the older and wiser Fishbone still kick ass as severely and bittersweetly as they did when they first surfaced to years ago. —Omoronke Idowu

REVOLUTIONS
BEAD OF ROWDY



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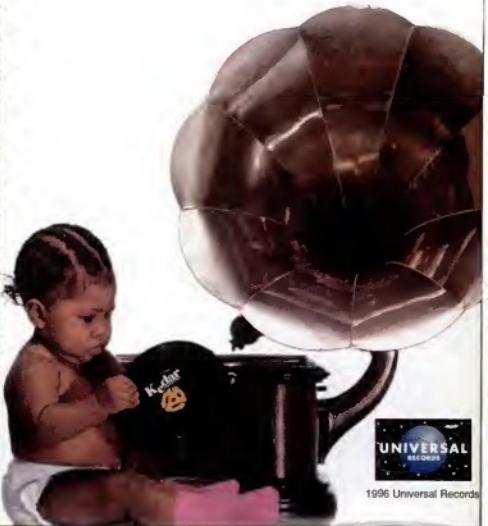
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REVOLUTIONS
HEADLINES

While Donell Jones sings with passion and youthful fervor, most of the songs on his debut, *My Heart*, lack originality. The first single, "In the Hood (Playas Version)," too vividly recalls DRS's 1993 "Gangsta Lean." And Jones's rendering of Stevie Wonder's 1976 "Knocks Me off My Feet" is overshadowed by Tevin Campbell's

beautiful cover of the classic featured on the recent soundtrack for *A Thin Line Between Love & Hate*. "Wish You Were Here" captures the yearning of a recently lost love, but the rest of the album is no more than satisfactory. Donell Jones has some promise, but his *Heart* is in need of more vigor. *Tonya Pendleton*

DONELL JONES
'MY HEART'
LAFace



CASE 'CASE' DEF JAM

The songs from "back in the day" that today's self-styled player muthufs constantly claim as influence demanded a vulnerability they seem incapable of expressing. Fortunately, Case offers safe haven from the pimp mentality. While the music is often flat and uncompelling, and Case isn't as polished or prone to vocal exhibitionism as Aaron, K-Ci, R., et al., his voice and lyrics are refreshingly earnest and sensitive. Women are portrayed as partners and friends as well as lovers. No tired euphemisms about "going downtown" or braggadocio about sexual conquests; just sincere expressions of real love in songs like "Don't Be Afraid," "I Got Cha," and the smash "Touch Me, Tease Me." With slightly stronger music, Case would serve as a welcome declaration that the Era of the Mack needs to be over. *Darrell M. McNeil*

Photo: JEFFREY MCKEE

REVOLUTIONS
HEADLINES

Troy Jackson
stays close to HOME,
even when he's
100 miles away.



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Louise Wilson
SHARED her
poetry with her relatives
without
uttering a word.



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DELINQUENT HABITS 'DELINQUENT HABITS'



In their lowriding hit "Tres Delinquentes," these Latin linguists start out convincing you they're the prelethargic Cypress Hill, swiping street gangs from 1979's *The Warriors* and mariachi brass from Herb Alpert's 1962 *The Lonely Bull* for their CD cover. But only "Lower East Side" and the fajita-cookout cool-out "Good Times" keep the promise. The Habits pull off some slick Coolio parables and Rammellzee staccatos, and the Arabic-to-Gothic-to-grungie backup beats manage moody moments. But when they try to be badass (especially when they hire some half-wit chick to curse a lot), they slip into dullness more than War-style darkness.

Chuck Eddy

REVOLUTIONS
MOVEMENTS
HEADLINES

J U S T T H E F A C T S FEMALE MCs

When it comes to the business of hip hop, it's like Ice Cube said: Some rappers go platinum every time they cose. But female MCs have never been afforded that luxury. Newcomers like Foxy Brown, Little Kim, and Bahamadia notwithstanding, overt M-I-C femininity has been proven to end careers faster than J.J. Fed rocked the third verse of "Supersonic." It took Queen Latifah three albums to even hit gold sales (*Black Reign* in 1993), and gangsta bitch attitudes like the Boss's had shorter shelf lives than dairy products. Only by balancing their sexuality with a brazen "I'm not to be fucked with" attitude have female MCs managed to survive the all-too-exclusive boys' club rap game.

Compiled by GJ LIMA

Best-Selling Female MCs:

Salt-N-Pepa

- *Hot Coal & Vicious* (1987)—platinum
- *A Salt With a Deadly Pepa* (1988)—gold
- *Blacks' Magic* (1990)—platinum
- *Very Necessary* (1993)—three platinum

Best Performances Upstaging the Guys

- Sha-Rock (Funky Four Plus One): "It's the Joint" (1981)
- Ladybug (Digable Planets): *Reachin' (A New Refutation of Time and Space)* (1993)—gold
- Lauryn Hill (the Fugees): *The Score* (1996)—four platinum

Best Comeback by a Female MC:

MC Lyte

After two albums in three years (1989's

Eyes on This and 1991's *Act Like You Know*), Lyte took a two-year hiatus and came back in 1993 with the hard rock anthem "Ruffneck," which garnered her first gold single—the first ever by a solo female MC. She received her second this year with the R&B-flavored "Keep On Keepin' On," her collaboration with Atlanta's own Xscape.

Female MCs Missing in Action

- Byrches With Problems
- Monie Love
- Roxanne Shanté
- Smooth
- Beatz With Attitude
- Nefertiti
- Boz
- The Lady of Rage (what ever happened to her debut album, anyway?)

Source: RIAA

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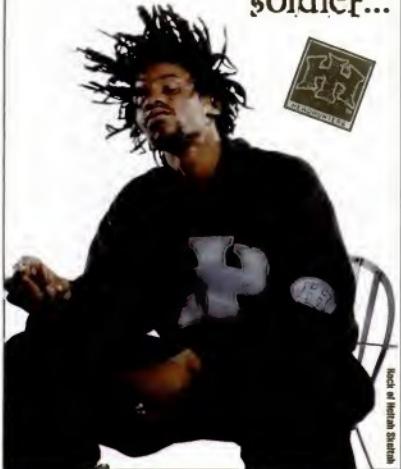


Photo by Michael Stachuk

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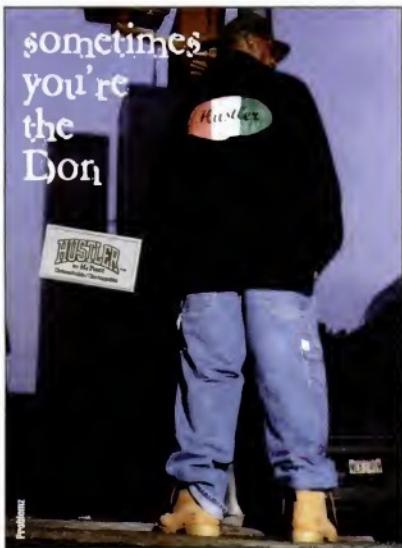


Photo by Michael Stachuk

NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

REVOLUTIONS
REFORMATION

The saga began last April at Manhattan's Lyncist Lounge. After a long night of lyrical gunfights and verbal tours of Italian fashion showrooms, I was ready to bounce. As I headed toward the double doors, eyes transfixed on the exit sign, I heard a name—THE LAST EMPEROR—that commanded my attention. Unlike the many MCs who used the performance opportunity to be keep-it-realists, this Philadelphia-based rhythm wrecker sliced like Bruce Leroy, flipping the kind of gangster-intimidating lyrics stimulating to those blessed enough to be critical thinkers.

"Dip, dip dive / I socialize with sharp knives / In the dark part of the jungle / Where Tarzan could not survive," he brags on the threatening "Animalistics." In the concrete wilderness of which he speaks,

Emperor is an all-powerful MC who can metamorphose into any animal and then greedily devour the competition. "Animalistics" is delivered on Emperor's three-song demo tape with the same hardness he brought to his performance, but on-the-money production by New Jersey-based newcomers Tyke and Dorsye can be heard more clearly on tape than through sound-man-sabotaged speakers.

Though the beats pound with heavy kick drums and a light 808, the snare hit is a little more subtle. The overall track is rugged and radio-friendly—a feat unto itself. By the end of August, Ay-Et Management (718-467-2307) hopes to release Emperor's equally impressive debut single, "Black Magic." As of now, an album deal is but an Emperor's wishful thought. But if a label comes through (hint, hint), expect the Last Emperor to begin his worldwide reign.

The thing I love most about the Ewing, N.J.-based MC LOGIC is his ability to ride the beat while alternating his rhyme flow. "Collard Greens," Logic's adjective-activated single, is a demonstration of this skill—listen as he rocks the M-I-C utilizing a verdant theme: "Before I puffed trees / I had a green pair of Lees / Now niggas that I see are green with envy." **Vocally, he sounds like a rougher C.L. Smooth, but logically he's a smooth-talking Mr. Smooth.** **Logic's** like gold fronts on a bright day.

Other cuts from his four-track demo—such as "100% Rough" and "Don't Test Me"—boast Logic's funky veracular courting over the fresh-faced production talents of Reg "Dome" Miller. Logic isn't signed, but he does have an album's worth of material—*Logically Speaking*—that can be checked by calling Maze Management at 609-497-6471.

If you're into that mix-tape sound—R&B vocals over rap instrumentals—Eboni's got the right songs to bump in your ride while you front. With more soul than Flyguy's (the character from 1988's *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka*) shoes, the Washington, D.C. resident rips shit over an instrumental of Smoother da Hustler's "Broken Language" on her melodic-ogic single "I've Got Luvin' on My Mind." Eboni's soaring style is similar to loi's—cocky, unabashed, and refreshingly unlike the generic whining many singers today get away with. "I've Got Luvin' on My Mind" should be hitting record store shelves as you read this, while Eboni's debut, *Lessons in Love*, should be available sometime in early October. For further edutainment, contact Die Hard Recordings at 212-905-7900.

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The Last Emperor

Q²⁰UESTI^NS

REVOLUTIONS
SHOUTUPS

1. Please help. Has anyone figured out the words to "Tha Crossroads"?

2. And speaking of Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, why do East Coast folks act like they don't like Bone, Crucial Conflict, or Quad City DJ's? (We see y'all's booties shakin'). 3. Were chubby jazz pianist Cyrus Chestnut and the Notorious B.I.G. separated at

names—Freddie, Smoove, Rick the Gangsta of Love—have anything to do with why they are so shamelessly corny? (They can really sing, though.)

12. Why do we love ESPN commentator Stuart Scott? 13. When did it get to be fly to cuff your pants 14 inches? 14. Besides being a white girl with big-ass lips, what's so great about Liv Tyler anyway?

15. Aren't you just fiending for an MC battle between



Craig



Brian Austin Green and joey Lawrence, so we can know once and for all who's the real King of Wack? 16. Why is it that when Snoop Doggy Dogg finally releases his forthcoming *Tha Doggfather* (pos-

ibly backed by a live orchestra, we hear) everyone's gonna be on deez-nutz? 17. Why Toni Braxton and (ridiculously cute) Bryce from Groove Theory gotta be a couple? Damn, he's only in the video.

18. Do you think Ce Ce Peniston is singing "Finally" after hooking up romantically with JoJo from Jodeci? 19. In the wake of his outrageous N.Y.C. performance at Central Park's Summer Stage, we're wondering, Why isn't avant-garde saxophonist Pharoah Sanders running for president? 20. And one more thing: Doesn't Tevin Campbell now look like Jodeci's Mr. Dalvin in a bad wig that he could have borrowed from RuPaul?



birth? 4. Um, did Puffy Combs completely forget about Craig Mack? 5. While we're on Puffy, is he finally getting some competition from the Fugees? Lauryn Hill for Most Video Guest Appearances? 6. And can someone—anyone—explain what the Fugees' video for "Killing Me Softly" is about? 7. Seriously—is Bill Bellamy getting sexier, or what? 8. Why did someone tell us they saw Montel coming out of the Hair Club for Men? 9. Isn't *Eraser*, starring Vanessa Williams and Arnold Schwarzenegger, just a more action-packed *Bodyguard*? 10. Which do you think falls faster, Valujet's stock price or its airplanes? Ouch. 11. Would SkindEEP's



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-Dr. Ami-a-k.a. Dope
De La Soul



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II D EXTREME 'FROM I EXTREME II ANOTHER'

GASOLINE ALLEY/MCA



BORN IN AUGUST 'TIMELESS JOURNEY'

BY STORM/UNIVERSAL



II D Extreme fancy themselves pop soul's "Ministers of Love," while Born in August claim they're "on a love mission." Neither of these male R&B groups puts a new spin on love songs, but they sure sound good trying.

From *I Extreme II Another* doesn't live up to its title. Most of the album's tracks offer uneventful rides on the same rickety love train. An exception, though, is the first single, "If I Knew Then (What I Know Now)," as well as the lovely "You Can Have My Love." Here, the group's silky vocals synergize with the production to create seamless love joneses. Sadly, though, as with their poorly received 1993 self-titled debut, on *From I Extreme II Another*, the group still haven't created the kind of memorable moods that consistently push love songs to the limit.

The balladeering members of Born in August come closer. When they stray from trite R&B stylings on *Timeless Journey*—as on the track "Anyway"—ardent musicianship floats to the surface. There are serious guitar riffs, and a freer (albeit sticky-sweet) four-part harmony that invokes innovation à la Color Me Badd. And on "Baby" (which melts away with a romantic violin interlude) and "Break My Heart" (which mulls over the age-old question, Why?), Born in August attempt to take R&B lovesongs to, well, the same Easy Listening heights as those top guns known as Boyz II Men.

Like II D Extreme, this twentysomething quartet (who came together last August, hence their name) coproduced and cowrote several cuts on their album, which seems to have helped. If both of these groups steer clear of redundant samples and venture just a little farther down R&B's tracks, II D Extreme and Born in August should reach a less-traveled destination next time around.

REVOLUTIONS
MOVEMENTS
READERS

READER RECORD REVIEW



BRIAN GREEN • One Stop Carnival • Yab Yum/550 Music

Remember the guy from "Beverly Hills 90210"? You know, the one who ran the school radio station, threw jams with Steve, rapped for his audience and entertained the crowd with his hip hop and break dancing moves (in one episode, he even played keyboards for Babyface)? Well, that guy—a.k.a. Brian Green—has turned make-believe into reality.

His debut album "One Stop Carnival," (produced by Yob Yum/550 Music, owned by Babyface's significant other, Tracey Edmonds) is truly a bizarre ride on the Pharcyde, os Slim Kid-3, one of the west coast foursome, co-wrote most of the songs with Green. Jazz meets hip hop on tracks like "The Closet." And while "Da Dromo" promotes peace and honesty, "Mind and Da Body" deals a dose of reality.

No doubt, Green is brave; there have been countless actors turned rappers in the past that did not succeed. But don't sleep. His album is definitely all that. One listen proves Brian Green will be in this industry for a long time to come.

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L.T.J BUKEM 'LOGICAL PROGRESSION'

GOOD LOOKING RECORDS



Remember the days before hip hop sold albums? When the music—available only on singles and mix tapes—was so deep underground that the very idea of spreading a concept over 10 or 12 tracks was something best left to George Benson?

Mark 1996 as the year jungle music is finally passing that stage in the U.K., when artists first started trying to get adults to buy whole LPs. While Goldie's *Timeless* was the first conformist gesture the underground made—a clear departure from stunning but unobtainable dubplates, tapes, or white labels—other artists are now surfacing.

L.T.J. Bukem (born Danny Williamson; called L.T.J. after the Italian phrase *Il DJ* and Bukem after the command "Book 'em, Dan-o!" from the '70s cop show *Hawaii Five-O*), who has deejayed in various guises since the late '80s, caught the jungle wave as it emerged from techno/rave culture. He is now president of Good Looking and Looking Good Records—the two most innovative jungle music labels around.

Logical Progression, his debut double album, showcases both Bukem and other Good Looking/Looking Good artists, and brings a new segment of the secretive junglist universe into the light. It opens with Bukem's own "Demon's Theme," a breakneck rave anthem with a militant edge. The stunningly ethereal "Music," recorded a full three years ago, is the underground anthem in which Bukem's innovative ambient flavors and ear for melody became his trademark.

But *Logical Progression* is also about Bukem's unfailing ear for awe-inspiring jungle artists like Peshay, Photek, and PFM—all new schoolers on his labels. PFM's "One & Only" is a dreamy, soul-mantra soundscape; Peshay's "Vocal Tune," a lone voice testifying through a hailstorm of breakbeats, intensifies the humanity of devotional singing. Bukem's methods are a lesson to anyone with an interest in retaining power in the music industry. And his music is like nothing you've ever heard.

Michael Odell

GEORGE BENSON THAT'S RIGHT

GRP RECORDS

Vocalist/guitarist George Benson does actually play guitar on *That's Right*, a return to the kind of records he was making in the early '70s before his voice became more important than his instrument. Unfortunately, though, he's playing nothing but featherweight cocktail jazz.

What ever happened to the dynamic, Wes Montgomery-influenced guitarist who had the jazz world buzzing in the late '60s about his delicate touch and terrific rhythmic sense? Back then, he was arguably the best in the business. That George Benson may still exist, but he's nowhere to be found here.

That's Right, his first album on GRP, is part instrumental and part romantic ballads—strictly for the Easy Listening crowd. But if you recall Benson from the days when he was a knockout guitarist, before hits like "This Masquerade" and his cover of "On Broadway," then this album is actually not that easy to listen to.

On the ballads, his roots are often showing. Sometimes you can hear traces of Stevie Wonder, but if Benson was going to borrow from Stevie, he shouldn't have stopped with the phrasing. What Benson could really use is a dose of Stevie's intensity. Songs like "Footprints in the Sand" and "Summer Love" are polished to a high gloss, every note and syllable exactly in place, without a hint of spontaneity or real energy.

Nor does Benson ever really cut loose on any of the instrumentals, which feature some minor-league scat singing. A few times he seems on the verge of exploding, like on "Song for My Brother," but then he meekly retreats. "P Park," too, has a promising beginning before a sterile orchestral sound creeps into the arrangement, defusing the funk.

As Easy Listening albums go, *That's Right* is okay. The instrumentals make fine background music. But if you prefer R&B or jazz brimming with passion and complexity, then steer clear of this one.

Dennis Hunt



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BUTTER 'BUTTER'

GRAND ROYAL

It's no surprise that the Beastie Boys, drawing on the same insane genius they brought to *Paul's Boutique*, are responsible for bringing Butter's debut album to the world. An ambient groove/indie rock/trip hop supergroup, Butter fea-



ture members of Cibo Matto and the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion along with Mo' Wax graphic-design master Mike Mills. Like their mentors, Butter mix funk and punk-boho experimentation with sizzling results. On "Shut Up," chicken-scratch guitars, funky-drummer rhythms, and acid jazz keyboards do battle with Yoko Ono-style screams; Matt Diehl

"How Do I Relax," meanwhile, freaks Sergio Mendes & Brazil 66 lounge for the '90s. With all these crazy ingredients, there's only one reason it goes down smooth: It's like Butter, baby.

ABOVE THE LAW TIME WILL REVEAL / TOMMY BOY

Along with artists like Spice 1 and MC Eiht, Above the Law represent the best of second-tier Left Coast hip hop. They show up the "gangsta" label for the inaccurate stereotype it has come to be.

A much-publicized beef with Dr. Dre a few years ago, as well as their signing with Eazy-E's Ruthless Records, got ATL some notoriety. But the group's less-than-spectacular sales ultimately led to their departure from the label. On this, their fourth album, ATL for the most part sidestep the glamorization of gangsta life. Instead, the rhymes on *Time Will Reveal* are peppered with the scars and pain of a life spent bangin'.

Live instruments—especially piano—bring a '70s flavor to the songs, which steer pretty clear of now clichéd P-Funk stylings. Lean grooves like "Playaz & Gangstaz"—not nearly as tired as its title suggests—mesmerize with synthesized strings, vibes, horns, and beefy bass. "100 Spokes" is a badass rollin'-down-the-strip lowrider anthem.

It's not all good, though. The eerie hooks on "Encore," an R&B-esque lament, crawl with more funky worms than a Mississippi bait shop. "1996" seems to strive for the dramatic symphony of Coolio's "Gangsta's Paradise" but falls short. And while it's encouraging that ATL don't overwhelm with bitches, hoes, gats, blunts, and other gangsta pratfalls, the simple, poppy beats can be a little disconcerting—especially coming from a group who put out a song as powerful and hardcore as 1994's "Black Superman."

Though the new, antigangsta hip hop world order may be saving a permanent seat for the likes of Above the Law behind De La Soul, Busta Rhymes, and A Tribe Called Quest, ATL still know how to strike a cold chord, especially when commenting on current events: "No place safe / Not even in the church," they say in "Shot 2 tha True." So listen up, G.

Eric Berman

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BECK 'ODELAY' doc

In 1994 Beck beamed into mainstream music boxes with the trailer park/beat goulash LP thriller *Mellow Gold*. The album was lyrically lined with disgustingly delineative images fresh from America's war-torn ivory-trash front lines, as evidenced on "Truckdriven Neighbors Downstairs (Yellow Sweat)" ("Belly-floppin' naked in a pool of yellow sweat / Screamin' jackass with a wet cigarette / It's just the shit-kickin', speed-takin', truck-drivin' neighbors downstairs") and his smashed hit "Loser." Via his sing-along satire of sarcasm and armed with folk-based, dynamic strumming acoustics and traces of hip hop consciousness, Beck materialized into a modern-day John Boy, documenting a population who had no anchorpersons to call their own.

But on his new full-on joint, *Odelay*, Beck goes Hollywood—big-time, movie-makin' hot shit. For this feature flick, he enlists the production talents of ex-Beastie Boys affiliates the Dust Brothers, who lend the album the same supertouch that fortified the Beasties' 1989 clout-filled epic, *Paul's Boutique*. Drums pounce with blunted punk-jam finesse. Turntable-scratched hooks pan whimsically throughout.

And this time, a more sophisticated Beck relays his own introspective emotions rather than the lifestyles of the young and the useless. "The New Pollution" couples joyous Mouseketeer male-female harmonizing with vintage, raunchy go-go dancer percussionsisms. "Minus" plows harsh punk pop bass mumble into flexible, Tweety bird-chirping feedback. And "Lord Only Knows" whips out up-tempo country blues play (reminiscent of the Rolling Stones' back-porch anthem "Dead Flowers") with Beck vocalizing bizarre verbiage like an evangelistic B-boy Bob Dylan: "You only got one finger left / And it's pointing at the door / And you're taking for granted / What the Lord's laid on the floor." All I can say is, Play that funkay music, white guy. Word.

ALISON DOWD

REVOLUTIONS
MATERIALIZING
HEAD

Sacha Jenkins



Billie Ray

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BILLIE RAY MARTIN 'DEADLINE FOR MY MEMORIES'

KRISTINE W 'LAND OF THE LIVING'

CHAMPION/RCA

Beats aren't the only things that change as dance pop evolves. When Madonna first made club music safe for the masses, she did it with a nudge and a wink and

an image that was girlish as her attitude was wanton. By contrast, today's divas-on-the-rise tend to be soulful, slightly sad, and sexually ambiguous.

That's certainly the case with Billie Ray Martin, whose odes to broken hearts and busted relationships on *Land of the Living* are almost exuberant in their romantic misery. It helps, of course, that Martin (an alum of dance group Electrile 101) is so totally devoted to the chilly textures and minor-key melodies of English electro-pop that careless listeners might easily mistake her for Alison Moyet or Erasure's Andy Bell. But as much as that pseudo-Brit sensibility adds oomph to hard-thumping workouts like "Space Oasis" or "Running Around Town," there's also a bluesiness to her voice that lends credibility to the gospel overtones in "You & I (Keep Holding On)" and "Hands Up and Amen."

Kristine W has her soulful side as well—so much so that there's a definite Matrix Wash feel to her full-throated holler on *Deadline for My Memories*' lean, house-style jams like "Land of the Living" and "Don't Wanna Think." But she can also come on jazzy and cool in "Breathe," bring an improvisatory playfulness to the brassy bounce of "Jazzin'," and maintain such a steady simmer through "Feel What You Want" that the tune ends up feeling like five and a half minutes of foreplay. Granted, that may strike some listeners as a little too much tease, but hey—isn't that what they said about Madonna a dozen years ago?

J.D. Considine



"The idea of being hard-core
is trying to live right."
—Mr. Bernstein & Co., P.A. Maseo
by J.D. Considine

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NIGHT BEAT

A CLUB LIST

New York:

For a full serving of New York City flavor, try Sounds of Brazil (SOBs), on Houston and Varick. Each night hosts a different crowd, a different sound, all New York. Monday nights La Tropica Nights with live Latin bands featured each week. Frankie Jackson's Soul Kitchen on Tuesday gives a blend of classic funk and hip hop with fried chicken always in abundance. Reggae dominates the scene on Wednesday. Thursday hosts Giant Step, hip hop beats laced with live acid jazz. Caribbean sounds come alive on Friday. On Saturday, SOBs goes back to its roots with live Brazilian bands and a DJ serving samba all night...The Tunnel, on 27th Street and 12th Ave., lives up to its name with 3 floors of winding paths leading into a variety of rooms. Aside from cage dances, a padded play room and lounge couches, it offers weekend extravaganzas of club and house dance till you drop vibes. Friday night is house music with Todd Terry. Saturday night features the legendary Junior Vasquez and Sunday night hosts the infamous Mecca. Mecca brings up-town and down-town types together to jam to the true hip hop sounds of Funkmaster Flex.

Philadelphia:

While you're in Philly, share in the spirit of brotherly love and give love to The Gotham Night Club located at Brown Street & Delaware Avenue. Philadelphia's premiere night spot for the sophisticated, urban professional has shown much love to artists like Boys to Men, Jazzy Jeff, L.L. Cool J, Teena Marie, Brian McKnight, Will Downing, and The Fugees. On Wednesday you can catch the Male Revue, \$7 for the ladies and men get in free until 11pm. Thursday, there's a live broadcast from Gotham on POWER 99FM the doors open at 6pm, and admission is free until 10pm. Friday, POWER 99FM hosts an old school after-work party with live jazz and a buffet until 7pm, which starts the Friday night throw-down party. Saturday is the old school - new school jam. Sunday the club plays host to the Come As You Are Party...it's a more relaxed and romantic environment is what you want head over to Zanzibar Blue Restaurant and Jazz Cafe located at South 11th Street. The Bynum brothers, Robert and Benjamin Jr. offer downtown Philadelphia a restaurant that features fine dining from an international menu. The adjoining jazz club features light dining and world-class live jazz performances seven nights a week....the brothers are also trying their hand at the blues scene. In June 1995, they opened Warmdaddy's, a restaurant and club featuring Southern cuisine and live blues at South Front Street, just a few blocks from the Penn's Landing waterfront. Both local and internationally known performers take the spotlight there each night.

BOSS

BY I.G. DESIGN

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THE REAL MUSIC

REVOLUTIONS
SWING

BY GREGG TATE

Any band comprised of superlative jazz tuba players brings new meaning to the term *phat*. GRAVITY, the tuba-heavy group led for more than 25 years by veteran Howard Johnson, are just now making their recording debut with *Gravity!!!* (Verve). In the liner notes, Johnson recognizes that Verve is the first label to take a chance on the band—though audiences have been down from jump street. Johnson and his cohorts have a combined résumé that includes gigs with Taj Mahal, Charles Mingus, Gil Evans, McCoy Tyner, John Lennon, Paul Simon, and Dizzy Gillespie. People tend to think of the tuba as lumbering and bottom-heavy, but these cats slip, slide, and glide through wicked harmonies with the speed and daredevil finesse of Tour de France cyclists. On their rendition of Oliver Nelson's diaphanous 1975 "Stolen Moments," Gravity take to the stars on tubawings. Johnson's solos are models of fluidity, contrasting fluttering runs with boisterous bellows.

The section playing and writing is righteously dramatic, wittily sophisticated, and drumhead tight. Johnson's thoughtful selection of material enhances the band's esprit de corps. The swayback funk that the tubists drop into Wynton Kelly's 1959 "Kelly Blue" demonstrates the downright nasty case with which the unwieldy instrument can slip into gutbucket blues (the plunger-mute solo by Dave Bargeron almost deserves a triple-X rating). "Be No Evil," a Johnson original, is off on some of Sunday-morning bow-your-head-and-pray tip, including a get-right-with-Jesus piano solo courtesy of David Letterman's Paul Shaffer. **And this is before the tune dives into a New Orleans second-line shuffle with appropriately placed stop-time breaks and solo expulsions of great heat, wind, and velocity. You dig??!**

Finally, after delivering the weightiest version of Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach's "Yesterday's" imaginable, they tackle Jackie McLean's "Appointment in Ghana" and Thelonious Monk's classic "Round Midnight" before closing out with a "Kelly Blue" reprise. File this joint under "serious swing you can also put round the crib on the weekend with."

The idea behind ERNEST RANGLIN's new *Bassline* (Island Jamaica/Jazz) is so brilliant that you'll be surprised no one else thought of it before: Arrange classic reggae songs for performance by a straight-ahead jazz quartet. And when that quartet is itself Jamaican and features Ranglin—the island's foremost jazz guitarist—the results can

only be authentic and stirring. Some of the material was originally developed by Lee "Scratch" Perry, whom Ranglin played with zoyear back, so the degree of cultural connection to the tunes is highly audible. Few Stateside jazz musicians play reggae rhythms with the liquid proficiency of these native sons.

My brothers in GROOVE COLLECTIVE continue to do right by the funk and by that misnomer "acid jazz" on their second release, *We the People* (Impulse!). What I've always loved about this band in concert is the way they maintain the sinewy, spacey flow of songs like Herbie Hancock's 1974 "Chameleon" without sounding like they're on some played-out retro trip. Everybody in this band of sho'nuff players grinds inspirational strokes with his ax, but the feeling between all of them—honed by years of jamming and backing up all kinds of singers and rappers—is stupendous. This is instrumental funk recycled through a hip hop sensibility—and coming at you all the way live. For real.



Howard Johnson



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THE DETAILS

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Brown leather military coat \$2,690 by Giorgio Armani available at Barneys New York, select stores, and Giorgio Armani stores, Chicago and N.Y.C.

"Film Noir"

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Notorious B.I.G.: Black suit \$395 by Charles Jourdan; white dress shirt \$99.50 by Lazio; tie \$65 by Rochester Couture; all available at Rochester Big & Tall, nationwide.

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Foxy Brown: Yellow-and-purple silk slip dress \$300 by Versace available at Gianni Versace Boutiques, nationwide.

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Kenny Latimore: White dress shirt \$160 by Joop! available at Izzy's, Toronto; black pant \$490 by Joop! available at B.N.Y., Santa Monica, Calif. Monica: Red shirt dress \$490 by Joop! available at Neiman Marcus, nationwide, and Susan, California.

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Sadat X: Navy blue wool suit \$1,830 and white cotton dress shirt \$300, both by Versace available at Gianni Versace Boutiques, nationwide.

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Monifah: Pink wool crepe skirt suit \$1,680 by Dolce & Gabbana available at Saks Fifth Avenue, select stores, Fred Segal Couture, Santa Monica, Calif., and Dolce & Gabbana, Vancouver; cream lizard-stamped leather handbag by D&G.

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Mary J. Blige: Off-white coat \$1,100 by Joop! available at Izzy's, Toronto, and Susan, California. Case: Navy blue pantsuit \$1,250 by Joop! available at Arena, Virginia; off-white dress shirt \$160 by Joop! available at Izzy's, Toronto.

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Taral Hicks: Pink cashmere/merino wool sweater \$625, pink wool skirt \$450, and pink pumps with pagoda buckles \$480, all by Versace available at Gianni Versace Boutiques, nationwide. Andre Harrell: Black naxedo by Giorgio Armani available at Bergdorf Goodman, N.Y.C., Saks Fifth Avenue, select stores, and Barneys New York, select stores.

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Johnny Gill: Black sheer shirt \$225 by Hugo Hugo Boss available at Charivari, N.Y.C., and Concepts, Miami.

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Horace Brown: Brown velvet suit \$2,430 by Versace available at Gianni Versace Boutiques, nationwide; black button-down shirt \$175 by Hugo Hugo Boss available at Chanvari, N.Y.C., and Concepts, Miami.

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Queen Latifah: Black leather double-breasted military coat \$5,970 by Versace available at Gianni Versace Boutiques, nationwide. Doug E. Fresh: Black glazed shearling coat \$2,895 by Donna Karan available at Neiman Marcus, select stores, Saks Fifth Avenue, select stores, and Allure, Philadelphia; black swirl-print shirt \$740 by Versace available at Gianni Versace Boutiques, nationwide; black jeans \$58 by A/X available at A/X Armani Exchange stores, nationwide.

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Al B. Sure!: Black chalk-stripe wool suit \$560 and silk tie \$85, both by Hugo Hugo Boss available at Boss shop, King of Prussia, Pa., and Bal Harbour, Fla.; black shirt \$495 by Giorgio Armani available at the Giorgio Armani Boutique, N.Y.C., Boston, and Beverly Hills. Ladie: Black single-breasted two-button tuxedo \$1,765; black double-breasted tuxedo \$1,821; black single-breasted tuxedo with piping lapels \$1,875; and black three-button tuxedo \$2,330, all by Dolce & Gabbana available at Louis, Boston, N.Y.C., San Francisco, and Traffic, L.A.; purple iridescent polyester shirt \$415; red iridescent polyester shirt \$415; pink silk shirt \$225, and purple silk shirt \$225, all by Paul Smith available at Paul Smith, N.Y.C., Barneys New York, N.Y.C., and Fred Segal, L.A.; black hat \$99 by Paul Smith Accessories available at Paul Smith, N.Y.C., Magazine, Miami, and Traffic, L.A.

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Jason Weaver: Black leather jacket \$1,245 and black turtleneck \$195, both by Hugo Hugo Boss available at Chanvari, N.Y.C., and Concepts; black granite leather jacket \$1,245 by Versace available at Gianni Versace Boutiques, nationwide; Valerie: Black sheer knit wood wool blazer \$1,245 by Dolce & Gabbana available at Neiman Marcus, select store, and Bagutta, N.Y.C.; black sheer silk chiffon dress with broc top \$390 by Dolce & Gabbana available at Romaneff, Bal Harbour, Fla., and Shanna Stein, Beverly Hills.

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Zhane: Black merino wool coat \$1,050 by Maries Spadafora available at French Corner, N.Y.C., and Carla Sack, Ohio; white wool coat \$1,100 by Maries Spadafora available at Bergdorf Goodman, N.Y.C.

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Michael Bivins: Orange faux fur jacket \$640 by Paul Smith Jeans; orange faux fur hat \$160 by Paul Smith Accessories, both available at Paul Smith, N.Y.C., and Ro, San Francisco; black metallic band-collar button-down shirt \$160 by Emporio Armani available at Emporio Armani stores, nationwide.

VIBE® magazine (ISSN 1070-1701) is published monthly (except for combined December/January and January/February issues) by Time Publishing Ventures, Inc., Times & Life Bldg., Rockefeller Ctr., New York, NY 10020-1393. Jim Nelson, President & CEO; Barbara Kacynski, Treasurer; Harry M. Johnston, Secretary. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to **VIBE**, P.O. Box 500, Hightstown, NJ 08520. Second-class postage paid at Newark, NJ, and at additional mailing offices. Postage paid in advance in U.S. funds. GST# R12546939, Vol. 4, No. 7 Copyright © 1996 Time Publishing Ventures, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be copied or reproduced without permission from **VIBE**. Subscription requests, address changes, and adjustments should be directed to **VIBE**, Box 59560, Boulder, CO 80322-9560, or call 800-477-7374. Please print name and address clearly. **VIBE** cannot be responsible for unsolicited materials. **VIBE** is a trademark of Time Publishing Ventures, Inc.





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ELLA FITZGERALD

1917–1996

Nothing could be more powerful than shattering a glass with your voice. A mere recording of songstress Ella Fitzgerald literally blew up the spot in that memorable '70s Memorex commercial. When she died of diabetes on June 15 at age 78, this indelible image served to remind us that she was more than just a woman. She was a finely tuned instrument.

A native of Newport News, Va., Fitzgerald began singing in Harlem amateur shows in 1934, then joined Chick Webb's band, which she came to lead after his death in 1939. A superrific solo career followed, filled with international concert dates, collaborations with the likes of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, TV and film appearances, numerous awards, and more than 50 albums. Fitzgerald quickly demonstrated that she could transform the resonance of her rolling, melodic voice from sweet little girl to sassy woman, from smoky horn to vivacious flute. She did so time and again, with "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," "Love, Be Good," "Someone to Watch Over Me"—not to mention her landmark albums collecting the songs of Ellington, Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hart, and George Gershwin.

And if all that wasn't enough to earn her the title of First Lady of Song, let's not forget her wonderful genius for improvisation. Ella's jazzy scatting and shooby-dooos gave her songs added dimension and vitality, and a distinctive edge that would serve as an inspiration to most female singers who followed. It's hard to imagine what Sarah Vaughan, Lena Horne, Barbra Streisand, Roberta Flack, Chaka Khan, Anita Baker, or even Mary J. Blige would have sounded like had Fitzgerald never sung a note. For that matter, her influence on female rappers like Queen Latifah, MC Lyte, and Lauryn Hill is unquestionable; it wasn't uncommon for Ella to forget a verse of a song and simply sing the fact that she had forgotten the words, without missing a single beat. How's that for freestyling?

But what we loved most about Ella Fitzgerald is that she became a world-class artist and celebrity, transcending barriers of race, class, and genre, without ever sacrificing an ounce of her African-American identity. To say she'll be sorely missed would be an understatement. Her passing truly marks the end of an era. *Emil Wilbekin*



The First Lady of Song in 1938



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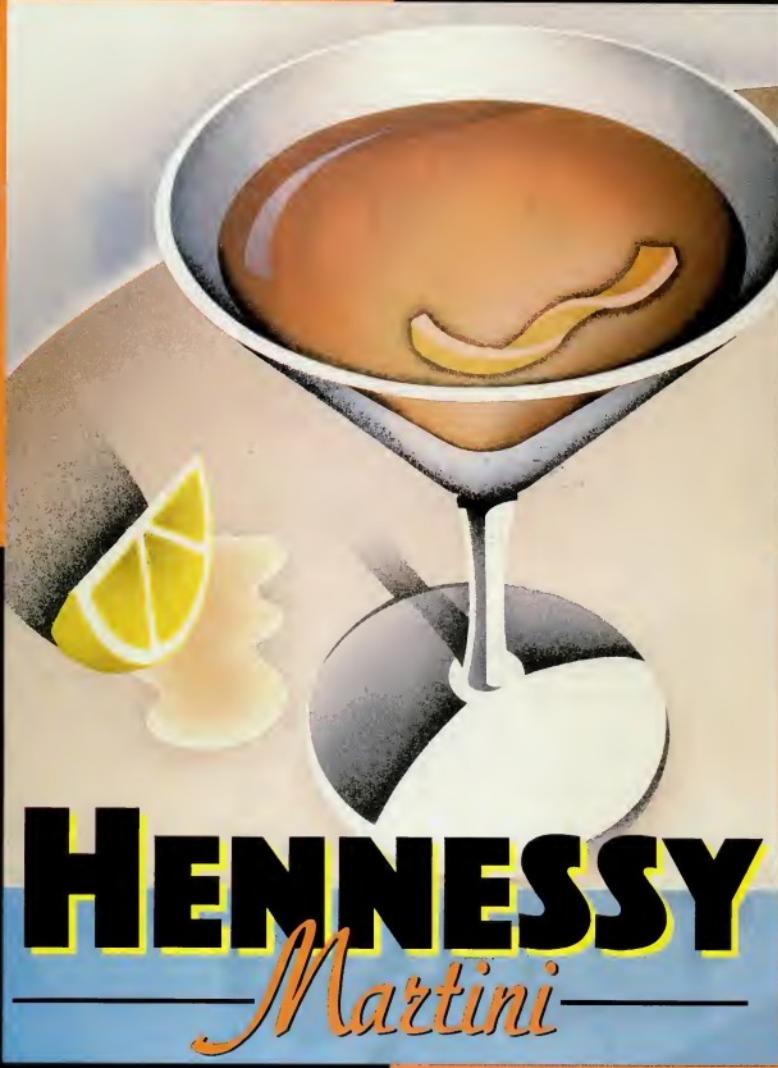
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